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THE

PULPIT CYCLOPÆDIA,

AND

CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S COMPANION;

CONTAINING

THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY

SKELETONS AND SKETCHES OF SERMONS,

AND

EIGHTY-TWO ESSAYS

ON

BIBLICAL LEARNING, THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, AND THE COMPOSITION AND DELIVERY OF SERMONS

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"SKETCHES AND SKELETONS OF SERMONS," "CHRISTIAN'S DAILY PORTION," AND "SERMONS FOR FAMILY READING."

THE LONDON EDITION OF FOUR VOLUMES COMPLETE IN ONE.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTICE

FOR THE

AMERICAN EDITION.

Among the auspicious "Signs of the Times," the increase of the demand for accurate scriptural knowledge, and the multiplying facilities for extending its hallowed influence, are not the least grateful. One of the circumstances which portend unspeakable public benefit to the churches of Christ, is the growing attachment to pulpit eloquence, instead of the *drowsy reading* which so long has thrust out the legitimate preaching of the gospel. Without controversy, no one defect in the services of the sanctuary, more incongruous and incompatible with all the ostensible purposes of social devotion and ministerial instruction, can be designated, than the modern practice of reading discourses in the "house of prayer." Theological tutors, and writers on sacred literature, who proscribe and endeavor to extirpate that wretched perversion of every principle of natural sensibility, common sense, and genius, merit the support and thanks of all those "who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," and who long for the splendid day, when "all shall know him from the least to the greatest."

This view is peculiarly impressed upon us by the fact, that with the exception of Simeon's Horæ Homileticæ, and his volumes of Skeletons which preceded it—scarcely an attempt, for a century, was made to disseminate those textual expositions generally known as an Analysis or Sketches of Sermons. The few specimens of that class of the seventeenth century are so ramified and minute, that their protracted discussions render them almost useless for the brevity of our modern discourses. Exclusive of Hannam's "Pulpit Assistant," which has passed through five editions in Britain, that department of biblical literature remained almost an entire void. Hannam's selected "Outlines or Skeletons of Sermons" are unexceptionable in their truthful sentiments and pious tendency, but they are both redundant and defective; and want that terse, vivid, and comprehensive condensation, in which modern Pulpit Orators, especially Bradley, Hall, Jay, and Melville excel. The volume of Hannam, in the last improved edition, combines a rich fund of didactic exposition and instruction; but owing to its derivation from the protracted discussions of the never-tired and inexhaustible commentators two hundred years ago, their multifarious details are frequently complex and tedious.

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More recently however, a work has appeared, entitled "*Sketches of Sermons*;" amounting to nearly four hundred, all lately composed and preached, and "furnished by their respective Authors." They are characterized by considerable fervor, are lively in their manner, and replete with evangelical doctrine; and will aid the student accurately to comprehend, and rightly to divide "the word of truth." Nevertheless they are generally rather too expanded and prolix to be classified as direct aids for the development and distribution of a discourse, by those whom duty urges, and capacity qualifies, to embody the result of their own experience and observation in unwritten addresses for the benefit of others; the formation of which is the immediate object of every "Assistant" to pulpit oratory and edification.

A volume of 500 pages octavo has lately been issued, with the title of 'Theological Sketch-Book, or Skeletons of Sermons; arranged in systematic order to constitute a complete Body of Divinity." It is the first of a series of three volumes, and is almost entirely a compilation from other works. One-fourth is extracted from the "Sketches of Sermons" just mentioned—two-fifths of the subjects are taken from Simeon's Horæ Homileticæ and Skeletons—one-eighth of the volume is quoted from Hannam's "Pulpit Assistant"—and another eighth has been culled from the "Preacher." The value of the volume therefore, for the purposes of scriptural exposition and ministerial help, is precisely identical with that of Hannam's "Pulpit Assistant," and the "Sketches of Sermons," with the additions from Simeon's analytical Works. The Theological Sketch-Book, in truth, is merely a systematic selection chiefly from Simeon's Works; with discussions from Hannam's "Pulpit Assistant," and the "Sketches of Sermons," to render the course of theological textual exposition perfect.

The Pulpit Cyclopedia differs from all those works, both in the unity of its design, and in the superior adaptation of the means to the end. The scriptural theory of the contents of this volume may thus lucidly and emphatically be announced: "There are certain doctrines which form the basis of Christianity, and support the temple of truth; and they should ever be prominent and conspicuous in all discourses designed to promote the salvation of immortal souls. Therefore, the fall of man; the divinity, atonement, and intercession of Christ; the personality and influences of the Holy Ghost; justification by faith; sanctification of heart and life; and the eternal state of joy or punishment after death, are assumed as established and essential points." There is a charming simplicity, with energy, in the Skeletons and Sketches of the Pulpit Cyclopedia. Moreover, they are concise, although comprehensive and perfect. They are neither defective in the general outline, nor redundant in the explication.

The heads are designed as fertile remembrancers only; and the filling up is transferred to the taste and ingenuity of the Preacher. Much acquaintance with the general character of promiscuous assemblies is developed both in the choice of subjects, and in the manner of expounding and enforcing them; and for application, force, warmth, and practical improvement, the "Pulpit Cyclopedia and Christian Minister's Companion," as a storehouse of expository materials for the pulpit, is superior to either of the other collections—although the "Sketches of Sermons" embody much of the same fervor, and exemplify some of its choice attributes

The Pulpit Cyclopedia is most happily calculated to facilitate the aptness to teach which the Apostle Paul requires of all who are "ministers of the New Testament;" and if the present generation of Theological Students would use their memory and tongue more, and leave their pens on their ink-stands, so far as the preparation of ordinary pulpit discourses is concerned; we should not hear complaints of prosy, sermonizing readers, and inattentive and sleepy congregations.

But one high recommendation of the Pulpit Cyclopedia consists in the *four different Series of Essays* which are combined with the hundreds of Skeletons and Sketches. Those disquisitions circumscribe nearly the entire circle of a Preacher's official character, and duties, and obligations, private and public, personal and social. It is true, all those instructions can be found in other volumes; but an inspection only of the titles of the Essays, with the numerous names of the authors from whose works they are extracted, at once testifies the miscellaneous quality and the value of the admonitions and rules thus brought to remembrance from such various sources; and enforced by the examples and authority of the greatest modern masters of pulpit oratory and theological erudition. From this portion of the work alone, even if the Analyses of the Texts themselves were not of such intrinsic worth, the Pulpit Cyclopedia contains an attraction of which all the other works are entirely devoid.

Those Essays are divided into four distinct parts, the first of which is devoted to "Theological Study;" under which general title are found twenty-five disquisitions, all adverting to the intellectual apparatus and qualifications of an erudite and efficient Theologian. The worth of the instruction thus accumulated can be easily discerned, when it is stated that among the writers of those articles are found the names of Jesse Appleton of Bowdoin College, John Brown of Haddington, Thomas Chalmers, Adam Clarke, William Bengo Collyer, John Angell James, Andrew Reed, and Francis Wayland; with others, both American and British, of similar dignity and influence.

The second series includes the general theme—the "Composition and Delivery of Sermons"—which in its practical bearings upon the general apostolic monition, "Preach the Word!" as illustrated in this volume, is one of the most powerful sections amid the diversified contents of the whole Work. The high importance of the lessons inculcated in those pages is obvious, when we remember that the topics comprise not merely the theory of composing Pulpit Discourses, but also the most acceptable methods of enouncing the Truth—including "Public Prayer," Scriptural Exposition, and Choice of Subjects; with the Action and Elocution which are adapted to the Pulpit. All of which are taught by Richard Cecil, Philip Doddridge, Robert Hall, and Edward Parsons; with other theological orators, of almost equal authority, both as tutors and examples.

The third class of the Essays comprises a portraiture of the "Essential Characteristics of an Efficient Ministry." This catalogue includes thirty topics, which are enforced by the learning and experience of Richard Baxter, Joseph Benson, Greville Ewing, Matthew Henry, Heman Humphrey, Ralph Wardlaw, and Daniel Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta. The twenty-ninth article is an elaborate survey of the contrasts between "English and American Preaching," pecu-

liarly interesting and valuable to all who are solicitous, from the various methods of public instruction, to know that which is most affecting and successful.

The fourth series of Essays illustrates those very important subjects, "REVIVALS," and "PASTORAL DUTIES." The first discussion, on "*Revivals of Religion*," by John Angell James—the third, on "*Promoting and Conducting Revivals of Religion*," by Heman Humphrey—the sixth, entitled "*The Pastor in the Sick-Room*," by Christian Oemler—and the seventh, on "*General Pastoral Visitation*," by Philip Doddridge, are indispensable to every Student and Minister, who would accurately comprehend some of the most impressive duties of the Pastoral Office.

Thus, in numerous forms of illustration, the duty of Ministers respecting the acquisition of knowledge, the composition of sermons in the most acceptable and edifying methods, the cultivation of pulpit oratory, and the fulfilment of the claims connected with the pastoral relation, is exemplified in such an efficient manner, that the highest benefit must result from the conscientious application of the enlarged instruction communicated in the Pulpit Cyclopedia. Not only will junior Preachers and Theological Stu lents thence derive salutary knowledge, but elder Ministers will be reminded of many things that they are too apt to forget; their reminiscences will beneficially be awakened; they will feel becoming regretful emotions over the thoughtlessness and negligence of the past; their holiest sensibilities will be re-enlivened; and their first fervor will be rekindled, by viewing themselves again in this self-exhibiting mirror, according to the dictates of God's truth, in conjunction with the worth of immortal souls, and their own solemn and ineffably momentous responsibility.

Such are the claims of the "PULPIT CYCLOPEDIA," upon the attentive perusal and study of all those especially, who "preach the acceptable year of the Lord!"

NEW-YORK, November 19, 1844

PREFACE.

THE PULPIT CYCLOPÆDIA is designed to assist the Christian preacher in his preparation for the public exercises of the ministry. It has been judged by some that such works only tend to promote mental indolence and a neglectful inattention of their own powers and capacities. But surely there is a legitimate use both of sermons and skeletons of sermons, and it must be obvious that mere copyists, who depend entirely on the strength and tenacity of their memory, and their confidence in the exercise of that faculty, would prefer entire discourses, rather than skeletons, where both labor and tact are necessary to use them with advantage.

The assistance which skeletons confer, we conceive to be in the presentation of striking and useful topics of discourse, the exhibition of various methods of analysis and illustration, and the suggestion of hints and trains of thought which may be clothed in the preacher's own phraseology and style. Such we deem the proper use of all works designed to assist in the labors of the pulpit; and those who have to preach to the same congregation several times a week for successive years, would often derive considerable assistance, if such works did no more than present a rich variety of texts on interesting and edifying subjects. It is also evident that few persons possess all the requisites for treating in a lucid and skilful manner the all-important themes of religion. Division and analysis are the forte of some, illustration or amplification that of others. A condensed outline, with the leading thoughts of a discourse, may therefore assist both classes more comfortably to prepare for the onerous duties of the pulpit.

But to those who have not been educated for the ministry, and who are engaged during the week in secular concerns, this work is more particularly adapted. Surely it is better also for those who are accustomed to read sermons to village congregations, that they should be enabled, by a little premeditation and study, to deliver the truths of the gospel in a free, extempore manner.

In presenting the Pulpit Cyclopædia to the Public, the Author has endeavored to furnish a series of original Sketches and Skeletons of Sermons, and Essays from distinguished writers, on the various departments of the work of the Christian Ministry. The Essays from page 395 to 439 have respect chiefly to the essential prerequisites of the Christian ministry, involving the call to the work, personal piety and experience, and the intellectual, moral, and spiritual characteristics necessary to its right execution. The Essays from page 439 to 497 have regard to the art of preaching, including the compo-

sition and delivery of sermons, choice of text and subjects, the eloquence and action of the pulpit, and public prayer.

The Essays from page 498 to 555, are intended to specify those distinct features in the discharge of the ministerial work, essential to its efficiency and success. The Essays from page 555 to 611 relate to revivals of religion, with the onerous duties of the pastoral office. It is presumed, that none can read the essays on the fulfilment of their sacred and solemnly responsible work, selected from forty-four eminent writers, without instruction and profit; but for the student, the young minister, and those who have to engage in secular employments, and yet usefully proclaim the word of salvation, is this work chiefly intended. To render it easy of reference, Indices to the Authors of the essays, and to the texts of the skeletons and sketches in scriptural order, have been added.

In concluding these prefatory remarks the author begs to observe, that his aim has not been to present a novel treatment of subjects, or to startle by striking and uncommon modes of expression, but to present a scriptural, plain, and systematic view of the texts and subjects under consideration.

London, August, 1844

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THE

PULPIT CYCLOPÆDIA.

THE GOSPEL PREACHER.

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel."—1 Cor. ix. 16.

What an interesting and illustrious character was the writer of the text, the apostle Paul! Once an enemy of Christ, eager to destroy the Christian church; ravening as a wolf on his prey; arrested by divine power; humbled in the dust as a penitent sinner; glorying in the cross of Christ. Living to make Jesus known; counting all things but loss, &c.; encompassing sea and land to save souls. A disinterested, magnanimous preacher of the gospel. Toiling with his hands, &c. What a trophy of the Saviour's love! What a model for preachers! Hearken to the averment of the text; and let us notice how it should be a pattern for a Christian ministry. Observe what the Christian minister should preach, and the spirit in which his ministry should be discharged.

I. What a Christian minister should preach. "The gospel." That is, the good news, the glad tidings, the message of mercy, the announcement of God's reconciliation to us, and his desire that the world should be reconciled to him. Now we do not assert that nothing but the gospel should be preached. We may refer to man's primitive state; to the entrance of sin; to the judgments of God on the ungodly; to the giving of the law; to the lives both of the wicked and the pious. But all is to be subordinate to the gospel. This is to be the first, and the chief, and the last. It is to be the theme; all else to be secondary.

1. *This is the subject commended to the the Christian minister.* "Go ye and preach the gospel," &c. We have nothing to do, except as matters of divine history, with the ceremonials and institutions of the law; and the moral law is only to be preached that it may act as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

2. *This subject alone meets the state of mankind.* Every thing else has been tried to elevate mind and morals, to make men happy and blessed. Philosophy, poetry, legislation, &c.; skepticism, polytheism, &c. The gospel declares man's real state; the gospel reveals his only hope; the gospel contains the only message of mercy: makes known present and eternal blessedness, peace with God through Christ Jesus, and eternal glory.

3. *This subject must be published in all its richness of blessing.* Pardon, acceptance, adoption, newness of heart, holiness, spiritual influences, &c. In all its aspects; for they are all lovely. In all its consolations and hope. In all its fulness and glory.

4. *This gospel must be urged upon sinners.* "Ho, every one," &c. Announce as the herald doth his master, "Prepare ye the way," &c. "Repent ye," &c. We are to entreat, persuade, yea, to compel them to come in, &c. Faithful, yet tender; solemn as the judge, yet meek as the mother; inflexible as truth, yet pitiful, and kind, and courteous.

5. *This gospel must be preached on all occasions and to all classes.* Like the tree of life, it yields many kinds of fruit; like the spring, its stream is ever fresh and cooling, &c.; like bread, it is ever precious to the hungry. It is the only subject to the aged and the young, to the rich and the poor, to the healthy and the sick.

II. Why must the Christian minister preach the gospel? "Necessity is laid on me."

1. *There is a necessity of duty, or a mor-*

al necessity. The Christian minister is called, and put into the ministry. This is his sphere, his work; he is qualified for this express end. While God may give to another the talent and skill for painting, or for excelling in art or science, or muscular power for great physical exertion; he gives the Christian minister spiritual knowledge, and utterance, and ability to show men the way of salvation. He says to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Now if such were not to preach, it would grieve God, and be sinning against his Holy Spirit. Therefore, there is a necessity that we preach the gospel. We are not to consult taste, or feeling, or convenience, or advantage, &c.

2. *There is a necessity of love, or a compassionate necessity.* "The love of Christ constraineth," &c. We are internally influenced. We see and feel for souls. Our benevolence urges and compels us. Bowels yearn; eyes weep; the soul intercedes; and the mouth speaks:—

"Oh that the world might taste and see
The riches of his grace!" &c.

3. *There is a mighty responsibility.* As stewards we must give an account. Now the sower goes forth with the precious seed; but he will come again, &c. The Lord will return and demand an exact account. So every one of us must give an account; of what we have preached, how we have preached, for what end, with what spirit, &c. When we think of the great day, the white throne, all the congregations surrounding us, the book opened; surely, surely, there is a necessity laid upon us, &c. Let us notice,

III. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY MUST BE DISCHARGED. That is, of self-abasement; humiliation before God. "Nothing to glory of." We are as nothing, but the earthen vessels, &c. All the glory is the Lord's.

1. *Look at the subject of our preaching.* Not ours; from God. Our wisdom did not devise; our goodness, &c. Full of God; Christ is its glory, the cross its attraction. "God forbid that we should glory," &c.

2. *Consider our qualifications.* These are physical, and mental, and moral. Ourselves not the source of any. Voice, and energy, and power of endurance; all from God. Mind acute, imaginative, energetic; all from God. A heart to feel for the perishing, &c. All these are from God.

3. *Observe our opportunities for laboring.* We read of an effectual door being opened for preaching the word. Now God only can effect this. He fixes our sphere, disposeth persons to hear, gives us favor in their eyes, and removes obstacles, &c.

4. *All ministerial success is from God.* The apostles ever felt and confessed this. "Neither Paul nor Apollos, but God," &c. Who convinceth? Who converteth? Who preserves? Who sanctifies? Who keeps? Who comforts? Who glorifies? No spiritual victory is achieved without the exertion of the divine power. "The weapons of our warfare," &c. "Not by might or by power," &c. How evident, that however faithful, or zealous, or successful, the Christian minister has nothing to glory of, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *To you has the word of this salvation come.* Blessed are your eyes and ears, &c. Have you received it? Have you given it a hearty, believing welcome?

2. *If such be the responsibility of the Christian minister, how great should be the solicitous affection of the church for his comfort und well-being.* The apostle felt a necessity for this, "Brethren, pray for us," &c. Their hands require bearing up.

3. *With the preaching of the gospel there should be united the co-operation of every Christian.* The women labored with Paul, &c. Every Christian should be found accelerating the gospel, &c. All must do something in the gospel vineyard. Pray, &c.

4. *We urge this gospel upon all present.*

CONTENDING FOR THE ANCIENT FAITH.

"Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints."—JUDE iii.

IN the introduction of our discourse we cannot do better than define the terms of which the text is composed. By faith, it is clear, we are to understand the doctrines of the gospel, the great principles of Christian belief. By "contending" is meant a firm maintenance of those doctrines and princi

ples against opposers and adulteration. By "saints" are meant the sincere and holy disciples of Jesus Christ. Now the duty specified is that of the church earnestly upholding and maintaining the great doctrines and principles of the gospel. This was necessary in Jude's time, see ver. 4; and it has been necessary in all ages of the world. The truth has never been long unassailed: it is the very design of Satan and crafty men to deceive, mislead, and then destroy. Let us then consider more fully,

I. THE DUTY SPECIFIED.
II. THE MANNER OF DISCHARGING IT.
III. THE REASONS WHICH OBLIGE US TO REGARD IT.

I. THE DUTY SPECIFIED. This duty,

1. *Has respect to the faith.* That gospel system which is the object of every Christian's faith. Now the gospel system includes facts detailed by evangelists. These form the very basis of the Christian structure. The life, miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Doctrines which relate to the fall and depravity of mankind, their utter helplessness, their recovery by the mission and death of Christ. Salvation through grace by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The sanctification of the heart by the Spirit and blood of Christ. The doctrine of the supreme Godhead of the Saviour and of the Holy Ghost. Now each of these is essential to the very vitality of the Christian religion. The commandments of the gospel system are of two classes, moral and positive; the moral includes all our duties to God, to the church, and to the world. The practical obedience of faith. The positive includes attention to the ordinances of the gospel. Now these facts, doctrines, and ordinances, are evidently implied in the faith or gospel system. Observe,

2. *This faith has been committed to the saints.* Especially in two respects. Heb. i. 1, 2; 1 Cor. xv. 1. Also by the teaching and epistles of the apostles, who were inspired to teach and write infallibly, for the instruction, edification, and comfort of the first churches, and whose writings are contained in the New Testament scriptures. In being committed to the saints, is meant their being deposited to the vigilant care and guardianship of the first churches, and by them handed down to the generations following. We remark,

3. *That this faith is to be contended for by us.* The word contend, is literally to agonize for it; the same word is employed in reference to the Saviour's agony, or as the wrestlers and racers agonize for the prize. Now this signifies much more than extreme care to possess the faith, highly to esteem it; it is to be solicitous for its purity, to live and labor extensively for this; to employ all our powers, and influence, and energies, in its defence, and, if necessary, to suffer and die for it. Observe,

II. THE MANNER OF DISCHARGING THIS DUTY. We must take care,

1. *That it be the faith once delivered to the saints.* Not a faith professing to be it, but the identical faith. Not some learned man's definition or system of the faith, but the faith itself. Not our notions and opinions, but the faith. Not respecting this conjecture or that having to do with it, &c., and therefore we must have and hold, as sacred and essential to this, the very words of the faith as when delivered, the very scriptures which contain them. To these we must appeal, and for these we must contend always,—"to the law and to the testimony." Always, what saith the scripture.

2. *The contending for the faith must be in the spirit of faith.* Not in the spirit of proud and vaunting bigotry, but with enlightened candor. Not in the spirit of personal uncharitableness, but in the spirit of love to the mistaken,—compassion for them. Not in the spirit of wrathful denunciation, but in the spirit of affectionate prayer. Not in the employment of carnal weapons, as acts of parliament and the sword of state, but clad only in the armor of righteousness. Not in anger, calumny, and wrath, but in the spirit of tenderness and love. See an example presented in the 9th verse. Yet we notice,

3. *The contending for the faith must be firm and unyielding.* We must conflict for it, and not be indifferent, cold, and careless. We must be earnest and ardent, devoted and persevering. We must confess the faith, hold it fast, witness for it, buy it at any price, and never, never sell it. And this contending must respect the whole faith, there is nothing valueless or indifferent. Its author, its originator, bespeak its value and excellence. Indifference to minor parts has ever opened the flood-gate of error.

III. The reasons which should oblige us to this duty.

1. *For the faith's sake.* This is the mystery of heaven, the plan of salvation, the system of eternal benevolent truth. Who would not be anxious for pure light, pure air, pure water? This is the light of the soul, the atmosphere of the Spirit, the water of life.

2. *For our own sake.* There is an obligation, it is a duty, and therefore connected with conscience, with peace of conscience, with the smile of God, with the enjoyments of religion. We are to war for this, "fight the good fight of faith." "I have kept the faith."

3. *For the church's sake.* Purity and prosperity connected. Love, truth, and peace. "I have no greater joy," &c. Be valiant for the truth. Our forefathers did this for us. We are to do it for the present and the next generation. Remember too, the prosperity of the church and the salvation of the world are necessarily linked together. This is therefore united with the conquering car of the Saviour. "Ride on gloriously because of righteousness and truth."

APPLICATION.

1. Let every man test his faith; see that it is the ancient, divine faith, once committed to the saints; and let it be held fast; our times call loudly for it.

2. Let the faith be internal and influential in each of our souls. The main thing is the personal indwelling, &c., of this in the soul.

PURE RELIGION.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."—James i. 27.

The epistle of James has been very properly styled the practical epistle. It had to do chiefly with the duties of personal religion. It is not so much an exhibition of doctrines to be believed, as of the actions of piety which are to be performed. Two great errors exist, one which would represent religion as consisting in knowledge and belief only, and the other which sets forth a system of actions without reference to the principle and influence of faith.

Evangelical religion unites both, recognising faith in Christ as the basis of true personal piety, and good works as the superstructure to be reared upon it. Let us consider from the text,

I. The religion specified.
II. The evidence demanded.
III. The admonition involved.

I. The religion specified. Religion may be denominated the homage and obedience of man to his Maker. That course of belief and practice which God has revealed to his intelligent creatures. Now true and acceptable religion must,

1. *Be pure in its source.* This source is God's word. Here is the revelation of all doctrinal, personal, and relative piety. Every thing here has been written by the pure Spirit. All truths to be believed,—all precepts to be obeyed,—all ordinances to be observed. Just as the materials of revelation are interwoven with our religion, it is pure; and just as human opinions and ceremonies make a part of it, it is corrupt and adulterated. How important that our religious principles be drawn from the holy volume of the scriptures! Acceptable religion is,

2. *Pure in its principles.* Contrast Christianity with the dark systems of paganism, with the sensual allowances of Mohammedanism. Its principles are all lofty and ennobling. It has the broad stamp of divine holiness upon it. It is the transcript of the divine mind. Like God, it is light, and truth, and goodness. It demands sincerity of motive, and purity of aim, and uprightness of action. It allows nothing that is merely superficial, but demands truth in the inward parts, &c.

3. *It is pure in its influence.* Like water it cleanses. Like fire it refines. Like the wind it purifies. Like medicine it heals. It renews its possessor. Entirely transforms him. Imparts a pure motive, pure desires and purposes. Produces purity of speech and conduct. It changes the raven to a dove; the lion to a lamb. See this in the account the apostle gives of the Corinthian converts. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Observe in reference to pure religion,

II. The evidence demanded. Pure religion, &c., before God, is this, "To visit," &c. Where pure religion exists, this goodness and mercifulness of spirit and practice will be exhibited. Especial reference is made to two cases which it will regard.

1. *The fatherless.* Those destitute of paternal solicitude,—support withdrawn,—thrown on the charity of strangers. This is a condition of extreme adversity. Without the kind of aid of others, they would often perish. God commends such to the merciful consideration of the humane and pious. Our school and orphan charities are eminently entitled to our patronage and support.

2. *Widows in their affliction.* And the afflictions of widowhood are often numerous and deep. Solitary, defenceless, unprovided for, sometimes health deeply affected, and many troubles endured. The weaker vessel tempest-tossed, how deserving of attention, goodness, and compassion! Now, pure religion will not overlook or despise these cases of suffering, but labor to assuage by counsel, comfort, and assistance. But observe in giving this evidence of pure religion,

III. THE ADMONITION WHICH THE TEXT INVOLVES. "And to keep himself unspotted from the world." As if the apostle had said, to maintain Christian mercy, we must avoid worldliness of spirit. This is the great evil which hardens the mind, and renders it callous when surrounded by misery and wretchedness. Worldliness is represented as defiling in its influence, it spots the garments, and spots the Christian character. By worldliness we mean an inordinate attachment to the things of the world. Now, this defiles, or produces spots,

1. *On the affections.* "Set your affections on things above," &c. It prostrates the soul, makes it carnal, and earthly, and grovelling. Such lovers of mammon cannot be lovers of God. It defiles, or produces spots,

2. *On the conscience.* When the conscience is enlightened and has been influenced by sanctifying grace, it cannot dwell with worldliness without being grieved, and ultimately becoming diseased. A hoarding worldling cannot have a good conscience towards God, who demands our chief affections, nor towards men, who stand in need of our pity and compassion. Worldliness,

3. *Defiles the conduct.* How meanly persons can act who are under its power. How it perverts the judgment,—darkens the mind,—freezes the emotions, &c. It produces overreaching, iniquitious fraud and imposition. Need we marvel that the claims of mercy are neglected, when persons are spotted with the world? Now, this admonition to keep ourselves unspotted from the world is of great importance, and may be sustained by many cogent reasons.

(1.) As Christians we profess not to be of the world. We have been redeemed out of it. Delivered from it, &c.

(2.) Worldliness and Christianity cannot exist in the same mind, the one will cast out the other, they are antagonist principles, a man cannot have his desires and delights in heaven and earth.

(3.) It has often been the source of apostacy. Some of the seed fell among thorns, and the thorns choked it, &c. "Demas has forsaken me," &c. How many have been thus ruined in their moral interests. "They that will be rich fall," &c.

(4.) Only that which is expended on works of goodness will survive the present life. Think you, immortal beings in the eternal world will ever meditate on the money they have hoarded or laid out on buildings, or fortunes left to their children? Oh no! but that which has been given in acts of beneficence will abide and follow us to heaven, be published to the universe, and be rewarded through all eternity. Oh think of this, and then let the admonition sink into your hearts, and keep yourselves unspotted, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Do you possess pure religion? Is this your happy state? If so, cherish it and evidence it.

2. Let those who are strangers seek it. It is the one thing needful.

3. The practice of enlarged beneficence will greatly recommend religion. Of Jesus it was said, "He went about doing good." Are we Christians? then we must follow his steps, &c. "God is love," &c. Let us do good unto all men, &c.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."—HOSEA vi. 3.

ONE of the most sublime sentiments in the world is one in the holy scriptures, which relates to the knowledge of Jehovah. "This is life eternal to know," &c. To communicate this knowledge, prophets and apostles were inspired with the influence

of heaven, and the Son of God became incarnate in human flesh. To diffuse this knowledge, is the great end of the Christian ministry. "Many shall run to and fro," &c. To attain this knowledge should be the great and constant desire of every human being. "For the soul to be without knowledge," &c. To increase in this knowledge should be the constant aim of the believer. "Grow in grace," &c. To induce the people of God to aim at this, is the passage which we have chosen as our text. "Then shall ye know," &c. Consider,

I. THE KNOWLEDGE SUPPOSED TO BE POSSESSED.

II. THE MEANS OF INCREASED ATTAINMENT RECOMMENDED.

III. THE PROMISSORY DECLARATION GIVEN.

I. THE KNOWLEDGE SUPPOSED TO BE POSSESSED. The phraseology evidently involves the following, or supposes that some attainments have been realized, &c. What do Christians know of the Lord?

1. *They know some things in common with others.* His being—his dominion—his providence—his revelation of himself—his majesty, greatness, glory, goodness, &c. But all who are not of skeptical mind may know and understand these things.

2. *But they know some things specially.* Things which others do not. Some men have not the knowledge of God, &c. They know him in,

(1.) His merciful and gracious character. "A God, forgiving iniquity, transgression," &c. "Ready to pardon, abundant in goodness," &c.

(2.) In his reconciled love. Accepting them; adopting them; manifesting his love to them; receiving them into his bosom and family, &c.

(3.) In his sanctifying power. Removing uncleanness; cleansing, purifying, &c. Taking away the heart of stone, &c. Puting his Spirit, &c.

(4.) In the elevation and peaceful influences of communion with him. It is theirs to say, "We have fellowship," &c. God dwells in his people, and they in him. He walks with them, and they with him. He is represented as suffering with them, and they with him. This exalts to celestial dignity; it gives true felicity; it is the antedate of heaven itself. But as to this knowledge, observe,

II. THE MEANS OF INCREASED ATTAINMENT. "If we follow on," &c. To follow on,

1. *Is to give diligent attention to the means provided.* These are various. One is contemplation of the divine works; another, diligent reading of the divine word; a third, regular attention to the public means of grace,—hearing the word; a fourth, meditation followed by prayer for the wisdom that cometh, &c. "Following on," also includes,

2. *The practical application of the knowledge we possess.* This leads to an increased experimental knowledge; this is the most certain and important part of knowledge; no way so effectual to our improvement as this; it will apply to every thing in art and science.

3. *The cherishing a deep internal desire for more of this knowledge.* We must feel its importance; know its value, appreciate it, and seek for it, &c. Thirst, &c. Seek for the hidden treasure; long for it, as the tempest-tossed mariner for a haven, as the sick man for the dawn of the morning, as the exile for the freedom of his native air.

4. *Perseverance in adding to the amount of this knowledge.* World of darkness; impediments; an inaptitude to learn: therefore we must be diligent scholars in Christ's school, and persevering too. We should often ascertain if our mental stature is increasing; if we are adding to the stores of spiritual wisdom; if we are increasing in divine knowledge and understanding.

III. THE PROMISSORY DECLARATION GIVEN "Then shall we know." Now this promise or declaration implies,

1. *That we shall increase in knowledge* Not labor for its attainment in vain. Mind will expand, and be adorned. Path become brighter and brighter, &c. Rise from babes to young men, young men to fathers.

2. *We shall know more clearly.* It is not the first glance that always gives us the whole of a subject; we must sometimes read it again and again; in various lights, &c., become familiar with it. Now it is desirable on all religious subjects to be clear; to have lucid views both of doctrines and precepts; now by drawing closely to these subjects, we shall apprehend them more lucidly.

3. *We shall know more satisfactorily*

As we approach to certainty on any mental subject, we shall derive increased pleasure from it. With partial views, there is anxiety and restlessness; with certain and clear knowledge, satisfaction and delight. Think of the experimental peace of the apostle, "I know whom I have believed," &c. "We know if this the earthly house," &c.

4. *This will terminate in our perfection of knowledge in a future state.* "Now," says the apostle, "we see through a glass darkly," &c. Now we know in part, even at best, but then we shall know perfectly, no cloud, obscurity, or dimness. All subjects known directly; all transparent as light; not even a mistake left. All reflecting the infallible knowledge of the Most High. "What thou knowest not now," &c.

APPLICATION.

Now let me ask, do you,

1. Enjoy any portion of this knowledge of scripture? Of scriptural, personal, saving knowledge of the Lord.

2. Are you advancing in it? Try by the past.

3. How many motives press it upon our attention! We are formed for acquiring knowledge. It is the very light and atmosphere of the soul. It forms one part of the glorification of the happy in heaven. Shall we not feel the text as an incentive, &c. Let us all labor to diffuse, &c.

THE WORLD'S IGNORANCE OF GOD

"The world by wisdom knew not God."—1 Cor. i. 21.

The value of the sacred scriptures may be illustrated in a variety of ways, but in no form more strikingly than by observing the darkness, sin, and misery, which have everywhere prevailed, where they have not been known. We often hear of the famous men of olden times. We hear of their legislators, philosophers, and poets; their sayings are handed down to us. Portions of their writings have been preserved from the wasting influences of time, and have survived the ravages of thousands of years. But did it ever strike you that with all their intellectual greatness, all their profound research, all their works of soaring imagination, they were ignorant of the one true and blessed God? Our text affirms this, "that the world by wisdom knew not God."

I. Let us briefly advert to some things which the wisdom of the world did comprehend. Now the civilized nations of the earth for centuries before the text was spoken had great celebrity for their intellectual attainments. Their knowledge was extensive as to the principles of agriculture. They knew much of the laws of commerce and of political economy. They knew much of art and science. They knew much of figures, or the science of mathematics. They knew much of history and of the biography of the ancient heroes. They knew much of architecture, sculpture, painting, and poetry. They knew much of metaphysics and the laws of mind. I need only mention a few illustrious names to guarantee the intellectuality of the world referred to in the text. There was Thales the Milesian philosopher, Herodotus, Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Democritus, Euclid, Hippocrates, Epicurus, Zeno, and a host of other philosophers. Then there were the celebrated orators, Cicero and Demosthenes; and of poets we may mention Homer, Virgil, and Ovid, and hundreds of others, who formed with these the mental galaxy of the ancient world. How mournful the conclusion of the text, that despite of their intellectual grandeur and profound study, they knew not God! Let us consider, then,

II. The affirmation of the text, that the world by wisdom knew not God. Now we must not conclude that they were without certain ideas of God. Neither that they did not employ their mind in the science of theology, or were indifferent to this matter. The text evidently means that they had not correct views of the supreme and blessed God.

1. *They had only confused views as to his existence.* Some of the philosophers taught that there was no God, and the great majority taught a plurality of gods. Hence they had their gods and goddesses for all events, and all places, and all circumstances. The winds, the waves, the air, the earth, the skies, the day and night, the flowers and fruits, all under their respective divinities. They had gods for adversity and prosperity, sickness and health

war and peace. Socrates obtained more extensive knowledge on this subject than his contemporaries. He taught that God "was one, immutable, and the creator of all things;" yet he admitted that while he knew what God was not, he knew not what he was, and he thought they should worship the gods of the city where they resided.

2. *They were equally confused as to the Divine attributes.* Many gave to their gods the vilest passions of men; the more enlightened knew nothing of his holiness and rectitude. The events of the world led some to believe that God was capricious, despotic, &c. Plato, who it is supposed was acquainted with the writings of the Jews, seems to have had some idea of a Trinity, but all their researches ended in contradiction, uncertainty, and confusion.

3. *They had no correct views of the moral government of God.* I will give you a few of the ideas of their wise men. Seneca says, "Fortune scatters her gifts over the world, and rules without order the affairs of men." Others taught that the gods themselves were the subjects of an irresistible fate. The Stoics believed that providence only interfered on very great occasions. The Epicureans believed that all things were under the influence of an all-powerful fate.

4. *They knew not the will of God.* Some taught that pleasure was the end of life, that falsehood and even theft were only evil if discovered. They had no idea of personal purity, &c. Social order was utterly disregarded, they exposed children, and advocated suicide.

5. *They were ignorant of the true worship of God.* On some occasions they offered him human victims. Many of their rites were sensual, their temples were often scenes of infamy, and their whole services were those of anxiety, fear, and superstition.

6. *They knew not the way of reconciliation with God.* Many felt the wickedness and weakness of their nature, but they could not guess how the favor of Deity might be obtained. They wandered in the mazes of error, of darkness, tortured, fearing, and often overwhelmed with anguish and terror.

7. *They knew nothing of the enjoyment of God in a future state.* The opinion of most was the materiality of the mind with the body. Others had a vague notion of a world where the illustrious dead dwelt together, but in what that felicity would consist they knew not. Of a holy world, of immaculately pure spirits, and of the resurrection of the dead they were entirely ignorant. How true that the world by wisdom, &c.

LEARN,

1. The insufficiency of unassisted reason to the knowledge of the true God. They had the material universe, space, opportunities, talents, reason, yet they could not find out God.

2. The unspeakable value of the scriptures. This is the only guide to the knowledge of Jehovah. This is God's moral lever, it has raised our nation, it will lift up the world.

3. The obligations arising from our religious privileges. "Where much is given, much is required."

A RELIGIOUS SPIRIT HIGHLY RATIONAL.

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."—2 Tim. i. 7.

True religion has had to contend with difficulties and opposition in every age of the world. It has not only been violently opposed, but frequently misrepresented: it has been charged with the vices of hypocrites, and with all the infirmities of its friends. It has been disbelieved by many, ridiculed by some, and despised by others. I desire to establish in this discourse the following great truth, that the spirit of true religion is eminently one of rational and intellectual soundness; that every disciple of Jesus is distinguished for the possession of a sound mind. Let me then define and illustrate this spirit; and then show that it is emphatically rational and intellectual in its character.

I. Define and illustrate the spirit of true religion. Now, by this spirit we do not mean that extravagance and fanaticism which some professors have exhibited, nor that bigotry and intolerance for which sects have been notorious; nor that elevation of sentiment and opinion at the expense of the practical duties of life; nor that deep-shaded melancholy which some seem to

think is the essence of acceptable piety. But,

(1.) The spirit of knowledge, enlightened by the holy scriptures.

(2.) A spirit of devotion, holding communion with God.

(3.) A spirit of faith, relying on the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(4.) A spirit of obedience, walking in the ordinances and commandments of the Lord.

Now these are each and all necessary to form the religious character of man. And by piety we mean these in their united influence on the heart and life. Now I proceed to notice,

II. THAT THIS STATE OF MIND IS PRE-EMINENTLY RATIONAL AND INTELLECTUAL. Perhaps we shall perceive this most forcibly by contrast.

1. *Contrast it with disbelief or skepticism.* Such would persuade us they only are rational. Is it rational to conclude there is no God, no great first cause, no artificer? Or that he governs not the world—that chance reigns? Or that he is indifferent to his creatures, regardless of their conduct to himself, or to one another? That he will not judge or punish, that there is no heaven or hell, &c.; man a mere refined brute, &c. Now contrast this with the Christian system, and then I ask, does not religion evidently include a sound mind?

2. *Contrast it with a superstitious, credulous spirit.* To credit every statement, to accept every marvellous narrative, to hear and read, and never question, or inquire, or reason, this is unworthy of a thinking, reflecting being. And to be influenced by fears of the supernatural, forming hideous notions of what we know not—this is superstitious. Now contrast this with the belief of the Christian in the mysteries of revelation. There are doctrines beyond our comprehension, our bodies are so, our minds much more so, God still more so. But the belief of one supreme God, the belief of his love in sending Christ, the mystery of the incarnation, the doctrine of the Spirit's influence on the heart, do not pertain to superstition; they are truths revealed in a book that condemns weakness and superstition, and their reception rather argues soundness of mind.

3. *Contrast it with insensibility and irreligious indifference.* Thousands are utterly neglectful of religion; they never read the word, or pray, or meditate, or prepare for eternity; they neglect the subjects most momentous, death, eternity, &c. Now with the amount of evidence we have, is this wisdom? is this rational? Death is certain, an eternity is reasonable, yea, most probable. To trifle, to be careless is folly, the essence of folly. Now religion does not prohibit attention to the worldly duties of life; it enjoins these, urges diligence to them; but it enforces the care of the soul, preparation for death, and readiness for a future state. Now I ask if this is not the highest evidence of true rationality, in reality a sound mind?

4. *Contrast it with mere formality.* You say you are neither skeptical, superstitious, nor careless; you regard the external forms of religion, &c. But will these external observances do? are they sufficient? Religion must be of the heart, influencing the soul in all its powers and passions, having the pre-eminence, sought first and chiefly. Give all diligence. Now which is the most rational? What father would be satisfied with the form of filial obedience? what friend with the form of confidence and love? what scholar with the form of learning; or merchant with the form of business; or sick man with the mere form of advice and healing? Will the soul be satisfied with the form of future blessedness? with the name or sight of heaven?

5. *Contrast it with the spirit of procrastination.* Many admit all we have said, but defer these essential realities to some future indefinite period. They plead engagements, business, &c., &c. Is this an evidence of a sound mind? A man is crossing a pool from which the tide has receded; he says it may be seven or eight hours before it returns, therefore he loiters, although the tide may overtake him in as many minutes. Religion directs the soul to be the first and chief object of attention. It ever urges to-day, it knows nothing of to-morrow. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow," &c. Now I ask, which is wisdom, which is the evidence of a sound mind? Surely the Christian who prays, "So teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom."

APPLICATION.

1. *We learn the difference between illiteracy and ignorance, between knowledge and wisdom.* All learning does not lead to

practical knowledge, nor all mere knowledge to sound wisdom, neither are illiteracy and ignorance synonymous. Look at that poor unlearned Christian, and then at that learned neglecter of religion. Who has the sound mind?

2. *The more eminently religious the more truly sound and intellectual the mind.* O yes, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the right wisdom and truest intelligence.

3. *Neglect of the soul and of God is the greatest evidence of folly.* Let the religion of the cross of Christ be yours. Seek it, enjoy it, profess it, &c. Then diffuse it, publish it to others, &c.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF REASON IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

"I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say."—1 Cor. x. 15.

It is desirable to avoid three evils in reading the word of God. The evil of inattention to the spirit and signification of what is written, which is to be avoided by care, reflection, and patient investigation. The evil of reading merely to inform the mind, and leaving out of sight the moral influence the word of God is destined to exert on the heart and character. The evil of neglecting or disbelieving the truths which are too lofty or too profound for our attaining, or clearly investigating them. Many subjects are too difficult for the grasp of reason, which are by no means in contradiction to it. Let us then endeavor to ascertain,

I. The use. And,

II. The abuse of reason in matters of religion.

I. The use of reason in matters of religion. By reason, we mean that power of the mind, by which we judge and conclude as to the truth, or probability and importance of subjects presented to our observation. It is this power which distinguishes persons of sound mind from the idiot, or mentally deranged. This power, however, greatly depends on the possession of knowledge, the mental culture, the memory, and the testimony on which the subjects presented to us are based. Now enlightened reason in matters of religion seems to be fairly exercised,

1. *In judging of the principles of what is termed natural religion.* The existence, greatness, wisdom, and power of God, as deduced from the works of nature, and the government of the world. It is evidently a fit subject for reason to ascertain if there must not have been a first originating cause; that such a cause must have involved an exalted intelligence, an intelligence possessing a wondrous power, &c. Reason revolts at the notion of a world without a maker, a universe without a creator and ruler. The order, harmony, beauty, &c., of the visible creation address reason in a voice, which she must comprehend, and which she adores. What the poet says of the stars is equally applicable to all the works of creation,

> In reason's ear they all rejoice,
> And utter forth a glorious voice,
> Forever singing as they shine,
> The hand that made us is divine.

2. *Reason may examine the evidences of the truth of the Christian revelation.* As to the necessity, desirableness of such a revelation, reason cannot fail to decide; and of the variety of evidence as to the divine authenticity of the scriptures, it is the province of reason to judge and conclude. There cannot be any real contrariety in the volume of revelation, and in true unsophisticated reason, both of which have emanated from the one perfect source and author.

3. *Reason may fairly judge as to the subjects which revelation presents to us.* The divine character; the divine works; man's responsible state; the doctrines he is required to believe; the duties he is required to regard; the blessings which are offered for his reception, &c. Now all these must accord with sound, unbiased reason.

4. *As to the necessity and importance of a practical regard to the truths of revelation.* In its bearings on personal conduct, domestic order, national morals, and the happiness of mankind at large. Now reason may judge whether the religion of the Bible is adapted to promote these or not; and here the past history of religion will supply ample facts and illustrations.

II. The abuse of reason in matters of religion.

1. *When it is exalted to pronounce judgment on the subjects of revelation.* Reason should hearken and learn. She may compare and draw her deductions, but is not to

assume the place of God, who alone knows what is most right and excellent in itself, both in matters of faith and practice; hence unsanctified reason might quarrel with the mode of revelation, or with the medium of the mercy and love of God to man, in Christ Jesus, or on the grounds of human forgiveness and acceptance: reason is the subject not the legislator, the juryman not the judge.

2. *When it refuses to receive the doctrines which are too vast for its comprehension.* Allow reason this latitude, and the existence of one eternal, infinite, and unchangeable Deity is beyond all its power to grasp. Thus reason would stumble at the distinctions in the Godhead; at the divinity of Christ; at the doctrine of spiritual influences on the mind, &c., &c. If reason has pronounced the evidences in favor of revelation to be satisfactory, then the reception of its sublime mysteries should follow as a matter of course.

3. *Reason is abused when it is warped by prejudice and educational bias.* It requires a due balance of the powers of the mind to do justice to any subject, especially the great truths of religion. Skeptical training and influence will materially dim the candid light of reason, and induce it to reject what may be opposed to its own favorite peculiarities.

4. *Reason is especially abused when it is deemed sufficient for the guidance of the mind in matters of religion.* The most distinguished philosophers, in their contradictory systems, and inconclusive conjectures, have proved it insufficient; left to its own resources, it has allowed men to sink into the darkest depths of superstition and misery. It may be the eye of the mind, but it requires more light than nature imparts; it must have the rays of celestial truth irradiating and directing it. No one, by the most profound researches of reason, can discover even the first elements of Christian truth.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let reason be valued as its great dignity and importance demand.*

2. *Seek after its cultivation and improvement.* Educate it in the school of Christ. Give it the assistance, the essential assistance of revelation, and ever subordinate it to this highest authority.

3 *Reason spiritually directed, and faith in divine truth, constitute the intellectual and experimental Christian.*

THE NECESSITY OF A DIVINE REVELATION.

"O send out thy light and thy truth."—PSALM xliii. 3.

IT is quite evident that none of the works of God are in vain. He employs no unnecessary agency; all his ways and works are wise and perfect. Had reason or the works of nature been sufficient for man's moral instruction, no other means would have been provided. But man has ever found himself inadequate to the attainment of a clear and direct knowledge of the supreme Being, and in the midst of his ignorance and anxiety often has the spirit of the text been uttered, "O send out thy light and thy truth." The necessity of a divine revelation arises therefore from the insufficiency of all other sources to supply the mind with moral information.

I. MAN HAS NOT THIS KNOWLEDGE WITHIN HIMSELF. He has the capacity of understanding, the judgment, but these have no moral supplies of knowledge. Left to himself he grows up ignorant. The highest order of natural genius can do nothing without the communication of knowledge. However the mind may be exercised; whatever methods of thought, or mental effort may be put forth, still, without a revelation it can neither know truly of God, or his will concerning his intelligent creatures.

II. THIS KNOWLEDGE IS NOT SUPPLIED BY DILIGENT OBSERVATION OF THE DIVINE WORKS. Men may greatly expand their powers, and increase knowledge of a certain kind by a study of the divine works. They may form some estimate of the greatness and grandeur of the Deity. Some ideas of his power, wisdom, and goodness, but they can learn nothing as to his moral character, or his infinite counsels and will. They can learn nothing of law, of morals of duty. Of disobedience, of rewards, of punishment. Nothing as to man's immortality and responsibility, &c.

III. THIS KNOWLEDGE IS NOT ATTAINABLE BY HUMAN LEARNING. The philosophers of old were learned, and yet morally benighted, or at best enveloped in fog or perplexing mist. The true character and mind of

God forms a part of no language, or system of metaphysics, or mathematics. It is to be met with in no system of human philosophy, in no scheme of jurisprudence, or legislation; in none of the ancient poets. The wisdom of the world, however profound and extensive, or sublime, does not involve in it the knowledge of God and his will.

IV. THIS KNOWLEDGE IS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH ART OR SCIENCE. These are legitimately connected with the mental elevation of man. But these have been found among all the absurd multifarious rites of polytheism. Athens was the seat of science, when her streets were crowded with false imaginary gods. And sculpture, architecture, and painting, have been most extensively patronized when the people were sunk in the very depths of moral ignorance and crime. We remark, further,

V. THAT THIS KNOWLEDGE IS UTTERLY BEYOND THE RANGE OF HUMAN DISCOVERY AND ATTAINMENT. Man by searching without divine assistance can never find out God, or attain to the knowledge of his will. This is corroborated by the experience of all countries, where a revelation has not been enjoyed. More than five thousand years has surely been sufficient to test the ability of the human mind to discover the supreme Being and a knowledge of his will concerning mankind. The wise metaphysicians of the East, the learned priests of China at this day, have not taken one step beyond the ancients as to moral knowledge: their views and systems are like those, puerile, gross, and superstitious. Then if man is to know aught of God clearly, fully, correctly, or if he is to know himself, his powers, his responsibility, and his destination, it must be revealed to him by God, the Father of light, and the Fountain of eternal truth and knowledge.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. Our subject does not teach men to neglect the works of nature, or of self-culture. Much may be thus known highly valuable in itself, and useful to the world. But the knowledge thus to be attained, does not meet our exigency, the necessities of our undying nature. With this, we must have more and more of that which neither the human mind, nor all the works of nature can supply.

2. With the necessities of our moral nature, the supreme Being must be intimate. Such an intimacy with a benevolent Being must involve a desire to impart such a revelation.

3. The revelation man requires, God can supply. If one human mind can convey its ideas, and views, and desires, to another human being, surely God can do this, and much more perfectly.

4. The scriptures appear to contain such a revelation. A revelation worthy of their divine Author, and meeting all the moral exigencies of mankind.

5. In the absence of all other correct means of divine knowledge, surely this is worthy of our candid and careful consideration. On examination it will assuredly be found that God has "sent out his light and truth."

THE BIBLE A DIVINE REVLATION.

"Thy word is truth."—JOHN xvii. 17.

WE have already seen that man, without a divine revelation, is necessarily ignorant of God, and the way of holiness and peace: that he has no resources for obtaining this essential knowledge independently of a divine revelation. We now proceed to show that the Holy Scriptures evidently contain a revelation from God to man. The word of God professes to be such a revelation, and we have abundant evidence that the text is a glorious verity. "Thy word is truth." I shall not stay to prove that the scriptures were evidently written in the languages ascribed to them; nor is it necessary to show that their antiquity is beyond all disputation. That the Old Testament writings have been esteemed divine by the Jews for thousands of years needs no proof. That from the earliest centuries of the Christian era the gospels, epistles, &c., have been so esteemed is matter of historical certainty. Observe, then,

I. THE MATTER OF THE SCRIPTURES IS WORTHY OF A DIVINE REVELATION. The historical narrations in their antiquity, clearness, fulness, &c.—the sublime doctrines in their mysterious and resplendent grandeur, often vastly above, but never discordant with reason—its moral precepts, bearing upon all classes, conditions, circum

stances, &c. of mankind, so comprehensive, yet so minute—so evidently in accordance with the internal convictions of right and wrong—its facts, so marvellous, interesting, and instructive—its counsels and directions so replete with judgment and wisdom—its threatenings so just, yet so awful and overwhelming. We observe,

(1.) It reveals to us the Divine Being in his nature, perfections, works, government, and glory.

(2.) It reveals to us man in his faculties, capabilities, endowments, and destination.

(3.) It reveals our true apostate state, with its cause and effects.

(4.) It reveals to us our accountability, and gives directions how wisely to be prepared for our final account.

(5.) It reveals all our duties, both towards God and men.

(6.) It reveals to us the soul's immortality, the judgment, and eternity.

(7.) It reveals heaven and hell, eternal life and endless death.

And as the glory of the whole,

(8.) It reveals to us the mercy of God in the redemption of the world by his own Son, Christ Jesus, and eternal salvation through his sacrifice, and in his name.

Now this is all matter of essential consequence to us; all-essential to our present welfare and everlasting salvation. These are truths peculiar to the scriptures, and revealed nowhere else. The word of God is truth evidently,

II. From the style in which it is written. There is great diversity of style evinced by the various persons who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But each and the whole of the sacred writers have a style peculiar to themselves. No works extant which resemble them. There is a grandeur of thought and idea, presented with uniform gravity, seriousness, and simplicity. We cannot fail to discover here,

"Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn."

They fall upon the ear—they enter the mind—they affect the heart—unlike all other writings in the world. We refer,

III. To the unvarying fidelity and impartiality of the word of God. The writers were exact in detailing their own imperfections and sins, as well as the sins of others who were the avowed servants of God. Moses relates his own reluctance to undertake the divine mission—his killing the Egyptian—his rashness—his exclusion from the good land. The intemperance of Noah—the prevarication of Abraham—the incest of Lot—the idolatry of Aaron—the heinous sins of David—the weakness of the disciples—the fall of Peter, &c.—all are faithfully given. We refer,

IV. To the harmony of the sacred scriptures. There may be occasionally apparent contradictions and discrepancies, but care and attention are only requisite to show that they are apparent only. The chronology and history of the events, &c. all agree, and many of these are amply attested by the concurring statements of profane authors. The same spirit and feeling pervade the entire sacred volume. The various dispensations and ceremonies also seem naturally to arise from one another. We refer,

V. To the purity of the sacred scriptures. They teach and inculcate the highest degree of moral purity. They legislate not only for the life, but for the tongue and the inmost thoughts. They demand purity of principle, and motive, and aim. They pander to no vice; they exempt no class of men. They allow of no evasion; the highest model of excellency is exhibited before us for our imitation. The purest precepts are given, and the loftiest motives presented to our understandings, judgments, and hearts. How surprisingly different to the best schemes of the most celebrated moralists!

VI. The scriptures delineate most accurately the state of the human heart. No other book enters so deeply into the recesses of the soul. It presents the imaginings of the mind naked and loathsome before us. It directs us to the root, to the sources of moral evil. Who can read it, and not feel, that, like its divine Original, it searcheth the heart and tries the very inmost thoughts of the soul. Here we become intimate with the germs of vice; and there is no character but may see, as in an infallible mirror, his true state here depicted. It is emphatically the book of the human heart, and could only be written by him who is conversant with all the thoughts and devices within us.

VII. It presents to man real and abiding consolation. Severely faithful, yet it is inexpressibly tender. It denoun-

ces sin that we may be extricated from it. It reveals our remedy as well as our disease, our refuge as well as our peril, our Saviour as well as our ruin. It offers to its sincere disciples present peace and joy through believing, and it opens before their hopeful anticipations, joys and pleasures of unfading immortality. It is the book for the promotion both of the felicity of this life, as well as of that which is to come.

THE BIBLE A DIVINE REVELATION.

"Thy word is truth."—John xvii. 17.

SECOND SKETCH.

In presenting additional evidence of the divine authenticity of the scriptures—We refer,

VIII. To the fulfilment of its prophecies. Passing by the prophecies which related to various events in the history of the Jews, we refer to the numerous prophecies regarding the Messiah,—prophecies running through nearly all the books of the Old Testament,—prophecies detailing the minutest circumstances in his life, character, sufferings, death, resurrection, &c. Now, it is evident these prophecies were in the possession of the Jews hundreds of years before the Saviour's incarnation. It is equally evident, not only from the New Testament, but from contemporary Jewish and Pagan writers, that such events did occur in the life and history of Jesus Christ. Observe, also, the prophecies of Christ regarding his own death, &c. Also respecting the doom of Jerusalem, which was fulfilled to the very letter. But this kind of evidence is sufficiently comprehensive for many volumes. Babylon, Tyre, Nineveh, Egypt, Judea, are all monumental attestations of the truth of scripture prophecy. We refer,

IX. To the evidence of the miracles of scripture. The miracles of the Old Testament were numerous, striking, well attested, and can never be legitimately overturned. But observe the miracles narrated in the New Testament scriptures—those of Christ and of the Apostles—wrought often not only in public, but in the presence of their bitterest enemies. If false or spurious, how is it that neither Jews nor Gentiles demonstrated their fallacy? By whom were they wrought? By the most holy and self-denying. For what? For the attestation of truths which were hated by the authorities and powers that then ruled, and which involved the workers of them in poverty, bonds, and death. These miracles were connected with moral instruction—with the mortifying doctrines of the cross of Christ, and were designed to corroborate and establish the holy truths of the Christian religion. We refer,

X. To the character of the penmen of revelation. They were, of necessity, wise or ignorant—sincere or hypocrites—the best or the very worst of mankind. Could ignorant men produce such a book? Would hypocrites pen a volume so truly condemnatory of all pretence and deceit? Would bad men, nay, I ask, *could* they write such truths of sacred, incomparable purity? Were the writers deceived; if so, by what, or where is the evidence of their mental imbecility? What motives could urge them to write it? Not worldly glory, for that it invariably condemns. Not avarice, for that it totally reprobates. Selfishness could not influence them. To do good, even by false methods, the virtuous would despise. Besides, we ask, is it not strange that the time when the scriptures were forged, or the country and language, or some at least of the confederates have never been discovered? If written by the names annexed, then it is manifestly divine. To confute this is beyond the power and combination of skepticism to effect. We refer,

XI. To the singular preservation of the scriptures. Portions of the Bible were written more than three thousand years ago. Whole libraries of works have perished of much more modern date, yet no book has ever been more hated. What malevolent effort has been put forth for its annihilation! Kings, and emperors, and generals, philosophers, statesmen, and legislators, have all aimed at its extirpation. With disciples and friends chiefly among the poor and uninfluential, yet it has survived. It has flourished, while its adversaries have been entombed one after another, and it never bade so fair as at present to be the Book of the whole family of mankind. Surely it is the Book of truth, and the Most High has been its conservator and defence. We advert,

XII. To its mighty influence on the character and manners of mankind. Its influence on nations is amazing. Our own a glorious proof. Its influence on the social circle. Its influence on personal conduct and manners. Its influence in convicting and converting men. Its influence in producing in its recipients the fruits of holiness. Its influence in imparting consolation in adversity, suffering, and death. Its influence in raising the mind and heart to spiritual and heavenly realities. Who can record its victories of moral power and beauty? Who can rehearse its mighty achievements—its delightful transformations? Its influence has not been impaired by the lapse of ages. Its power is not limited to any country, or clime, or color, or tongue. Everywhere it diffuses light, and liberty, and joy, and blessedness. Surely we may exclaim with holy rapture, "Thy word is truth."

APPLICATION.

1. *Be well established as to the truth of the evidence of the divinity of the Holy Scriptures.* This is a cardinal subject, and of the highest moment; the basis of the Christian superstructure.

2. *Let it be highly estimated.* If the book of divine truth, then how precious, how invaluable! Then, indeed, is it more to be prized than thousands of gold and silver.

3. *Let your regard be evinced by a constant and personal reference to it.* Read, study, meditate upon it. Let it dwell richly within you. Let it counsel and guide your steps. Live in the enjoyment of its consoling and sanctifying truths, and in the expectation of the glories it reveals.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."—2 Timothy iii. 16.

By scripture in the text is evidently meant the books of the Old Testament; but the evidence by which their inspiration is established will also clearly prove the inspiration of the writings of the New Testament. The subject is one of sublime interest to the Christian student, how, and in what manner God conveyed the knowledge of his will to mankind. Let us in considering this subject notice the various degrees of inspiration, and the diversity of modes by which that inspiration was given.

I. The various degrees of inspiration. It is clear that the truths of the scriptures would require a difference in the degree of divine assistance or communication to the writer. The lowest degree has been appropriately styled,

1. *General superintendence.* When the sacred writers reveal what they personally saw and knew. As in Moses, in reference to his own call, mission, and history of the Israelites to the period of his death. And as in the case of the evangelists, what they heard and witnessed in the life and history of the Redeemer. But here inspiration was required to bring to their remembrance in the exact order, and also to give a clear, full, and unprejudiced relation of the things which they wrote. In this department they were preserved from forgetfulness, prejudice, and mistake. The next degree of inspiration,

2. *Was that of spiritual elevation.* By which the writer was enabled to enter into the moral grandeur of his subject, and present such descriptions as were worthy of the theme, and also to convey the thoughts of Deity respecting such events or scenes. The comprehensive fulness in connection with the clear condensation peculiar to scripture, also seems to have rendered the inspiration of scripture indispensable. The next degree of inspiration,

3. *Is that of immediate revelation.* Where the subjects written were not within the range of the writer's knowledge, as in the account of the creation, &c., &c., more than two thousand years afterwards by Moses. So also all the predictions of the ancient seers, in some instances thousands of years before the realization. Now in this degree of inspiration God made known what had previously existed in his own mind, to those whom he inspired. It will be seen that each and all these degrees of inspiration secure the infallible accuracy of what was recorded. Observe then,

II. The diversity of mode by which the inspiration of the scriptures was given. God revealed his will immediately and supernaturally to men,

1. *By the ministry of angels.* It would appear that one of these messengers is peculiarly distinguished above the rest by his

divine titles and superior nature. "The angel of the covenant"—the angel in whom is the name Jehovah, the redeeming angel, the angel of God's presence, &c., &c. Now these titles clearly have respect to the divine Son of God, Genesis xv. 1, 2, xlviii. 16. But God also employed the created intelligences to be the conveyancers of his mind to the prophets, Daniel ix. 20.

2. *By dreams and visions of the night.* Thus Abraham, Genesis xv. 1. Thus also Jacob, Genesis xxviii. 16. Thus Solomon, 1 Kings iii. 5–15. Thus Daniel, iv. 10. Thus Peter, Acts x. 10. Thus Paul, Acts xxvii. 24.

3. *By an audible voice from heaven.* Thus God revealed his mind to Adam, both before and after the fall. Thus to Noah, Genesis vi. 13. Thus also to Moses in the chief revelations which regarded the origin and history of the world, giving of the law, &c., &c.

4. *By resplendent visions and emblematical representations.* Thus the sublime vision of Isaiah, chap. vi. 1. Ezekiel, chap. i. 2, &c. And John, Rev. i. &c. And the emblematical representations of Jeremiah, Zechariah, &c.

5. *By direct communication of the truths to the mind.* In this way the light and signification of the things revealed were made vivid to the understanding and accurate to the judgment, and were deeply impressed on the heart, the tongue also acting as the amanuensis of the Spirit of God. See the inspiration of the seventy elders, Numbers xi. 25. Case also of Jeremiah, xx. 9; Micah iii. 8; 2 Peter i. 21. An extensive controversy has been waged as to the extent of inspiration, regarding the very words of scripture, whether the sacred writers were inspired as to the accuracy of thought and idea only, or were inspired with the phraseology of scripture. It would appear probable that neither rule would apply to all the sacred writings. It is obvious that the penmen of the divine word were extensively free to embody their thoughts according to their variety of talent and style; but it is equally obvious that in all cases their expressions were in exact accordance with the mind of God, and the subject they revealed.

REMARKS.

1. *How transcendently precious and valuable must be the sacred writings!* The thoughts and mind of the blessed God. A revelation of the will of Jehovah to man. Well may it be styled the book of books. No veneration of it can be too high, no attachment to it too deep, no attention to it too extensive.

2. *No marvel that the Bible bears such extraordinary evidences of divine grandeur and majesty.* All God's works are thus distinguished from those of mankind. How visible is this in creation, in providence! What heights we cannot reach, and depths we cannot fathom! But how delightful that all its essential portions are clear and comprehensive to our finite and contracted minds!

3. *With what sacredness and awe we should consult its records.* Not to be perused lightly, or with inconsideration; but with serious fear and reverence.

4. *How conclusive should be its laws and directions!* To this every mind should bow, every spirit submit, and every heart loyally obey.

5. *It is our great and holy privilege to have this precious book in our own tongue.* Thus it is given as an invaluable legacy to the poorest in our land.

THE SCRIPTURES NOT CUNNINGLY DEVISED FABLES.

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables."—2 Pet. i. 16.

A FIRM persuasion of the truth of the Bible lies at the foundation of our religion; doubts here render the whole uncertain and cheerless. To have the mind well established in this main principle, is of the very utmost importance to our satisfaction and happiness. The enemies of revelation have often asserted and reiterated the fallacy of the scriptures; this is easily done; any foolish, self-confident person can do this; and the Bible itself predicts that it should experience this treatment from those who in the last days should rise up—scoffers, walking after their own lusts. It is for the Christian, therefore, to array himself with the armor of light, to be well furnished with the evidences that he is not following cunningly devised fables. That we may be edified by our subject, we shall,

I. MAKE SEVERAL GENERAL PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

II. SHOW HOW UNLIKE THE SCRIPTURES ARE TO CUNNINGLY DEVISED FABLES.

III. OFFER AN IMPROVEMENT OF THE WHOLE. We shall make,

I. SEVERAL GENERAL PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

1. *By the scriptures, we mean the whole of the books of the Old and New Testaments,* commencing with Genesis, and ending with the visions of the Apocalypse. In these books is embodied a period of more than four thousand years; from the creation of our world to sixty years after the ascension of our Saviour.

2. *In the matter of the scriptures we have endless variety.* A great portion of it is history—history of the world for two thousand years; history of the Jews for eleven hundred years; history of the origin and spread of Christianity for nearly thirty years. A great portion of it is narrative of the greatest and most wonderful events; the deluge; the dispersion of mankind; the destruction of Sodom; the emancipation of Israel; the overthrow of Babylon, &c., &c. There is much biography, both of good and bad men—of the most illustrious of the human race; the first of our race, Adam and Eve, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the twelve patriarchs, Moses, &c.; the judges, the kings, several of the prophets, especially the life of the holy Redeemer and his chosen apostles. Much of the Bible is doctrinal, containing the great truths of religion; the holy principles of God's mind and will. These doctrines include the character of God, and his holy principles of grace and mercy respecting our world; the sinner's ruin and redemption; the way of acceptance and eternal life. A great deal is preceptive or practical; the great duties men owe to God and to one another; duties of all classes, spheres, and circumstances. Much of the Bible is of a promissory kind; the word of God is full of great and precious promises, relating both to this life, and that which is to come; but this is the chief grand promise, eternal salvation through Christ Jesus. Another subject of the holy scriptures is prediction; referring to the various events which God has declared shall come to pass; many of these have been accomplished, many yet remain to be fulfilled.

3. *The word of God was written in divers manners and in various ages of the world.* The first five books were written by Moses; others by Ezra and the prophets, by the evangelists and the apostles. The writers were inspired, that is, enlightened and guided as to the subjects on which they wrote. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," &c. "Holy men of old wrote," &c. Visions, dreams, voices from heaven, &c. What they saw and witnessed, &c.

4. *The word of God is a complete rule of faith and life.* We need know no more. It is full, copious, all-sufficient; a rule for every station, class, condition; from the king to the beggar, from the sire to the child. As adapted to the moral world as the sun to the natural.

5. *It comes to us in a translated form* The Old was written in Hebrew, and the New chiefly in Greek; some difficulty in translating, as the idioms of languages are so different, yet the sense is easily transferred, and though there are different renderings of the scriptures, yet not one essential doctrine or duty is affected by it. Italics are words supplied by the translators to make the sense in our language good; it was divided into chapters by Hugo Caro, 1240, and into verses by Mordecai Nathan, 1445.

6. *These scriptures are God's gift to man.* They are for our information and use; not designed for any peculiar class, but for all men; not for the priesthood, but for all: they form the true guide from earth to heaven, and therefore are designed to be the treasure of every human soul. Several great reasons for grateful joy in reference to them.

(1.) That we have them in our own tongue.

(2.) They are now translated into nearly 200 different languages.

(3.) So accessible to the poor; an excellent copy of the New Testament, well bound, for one shilling; of the whole for two shillings. In 1429, a New Testament sold for £2 16s. 8d., more than £20 of our money. Observe,

II. HOW UNLIKE THE SCRIPTURES ARE TO CUNNINGLY DEVISED FABLES.

Several classes of fables. We do not understand the term here to refer to parabolical writings, where often good morals were taught; many of the ancient moralists conveyed their truths thus: but the text refers to the fabulous histories and doc-

trines which were inculcated by pagan priests, &c. Now every religion among the heathen, Hindooism, Budhooism, Mohammedanism, &c., had their fables; now these fables were,

1. *Without evidence.* No proof that the events ever took place; depended on the mere authority of the writer. But the Bible is fully supported by irrefragable evidence; pagan writers have established most of the events stated in the Old Testament. The facts and events of the New Testament can be proved to equal demonstration with the landing of Julius Cæsar on the shores of Britain. The fabulous events of paganism are without dates, or are said to be hundreds and thousands of years ago; but the year and often the very day of the occurrences of the Bible are given with the most scrupulous exactness. The ancient fables,

2. *Were full of absurdities,* gross, monstrous absurdities, opposed to reason and to common sense. Mohammedanism is one of the most intelligent, yet the scenes in that would be laughed at by the children of our sabbath schools. In the Koran the direct contradictions are endless; Mohammed, therefore, insisted the last revelation was the true. The Bible, intellectual and sublime, worthy of the great and wise Spirit of its Author.

3. *The fables were, many of them, grossly impure.* Not one which contains a sound elevated morality; many of them so gross that our missionaries would not dare to translate them. The Bible—holy, high, unrivalled in purity of speech, thought.

4. *The fables gave no clear views of the way of salvation or of a future state.* All dark, confused, contradictory; no certainty; no comfort; no good hope. The Bible is the chart of life; the revelation of God's salvation. "Life and immortality are brought to light," &c.

III. Improve the whole.

1. *Be thankful for the scriptures,* every day, every hour, &c.

2. *Rightly use them.* By reading and meditation.

3. *Follow them.* Go where they lead; obey their mandate; then we shall be wise, holy, benevolent, happy. Thus be fitted for life, sickness, death, eternity.

4. *Follow them in their appropriate application to your souls.* In all your need, sorrows, &c.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF DIVINE REVELATION.

"Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart."—Jer. xv. 16.

There are numerous reasons why the divine word should be hailed with joy, and be a constant source of delight to the pious soul. It is the book of our heavenly Father, in which is exhibited his amazing love to his dear children. It is the book of the Redeemer, in which his glories are resplendently manifested to his believing disciples. It is the book of the divine and blessed Spirit, in which he breathes upon us the saving words of grace and truth. It is the Christian's portion, and the heritage of his heart. Let us then ascertain some of those characteristics of revelation, by which it is so endeared to the joyous affections of the believer's soul. He rejoices in God's word on account,

I. Of its adaptation to all his circumstances and wants.—He is a *traveller,* and it is his map, both of the country in which he is a pilgrim, and the land to which he is journeying.—He is a *mariner,* and it is the chart by which he steers amid the rocks, and shoals, and perils of the ocean of time.—He is a *pilgrim,* and this is his staff. Here he leans and rests on his way of weariness and toil.—He is a *warrior,* and this is his armory, especially it is his sword; "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."—He is a *subject* of the royal kingdom of heaven, and this is the code of divine laws, the statutes in which the path of obedience is revealed.—He is *frail,* and encompassed with infirmities, and here the consolations of God are abundantly provided.—He is a *student* of the heavenly mysteries, and here life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.—It is adapted to the youthful Christian, and by this he cleanses his way.—To the mature Christian, and by this he overcomes the world.—To the aged believer, and by this he is mellowed for the celestial garner.—To the rich Christian, and here safety from the deteriorating power of affluence is provided.—To the poor Christian, and this is the charter of his spiritual wealth.—To the tempted Christian, and here the wiles of the enemy and the means of conquest are revealed.—To the suffering Christian, and here the solace of divine compassion and support are communicated

--To the dying Christian, and on this staff he reclines in the dreary valley and shadow of death, and fears no evil. Well may he exclaim, "Thy word was unto me the joy," &c. He rejoices in God's word,

II. On account of its clearness and perspicuity. We do not deny that it has its sublime mysteries, its lofty themes, its profound depths, its incomprehensible doctrines.

1. *But the doctrines essential to salvation are clear.* The depravity of the human heart, the redemption of the world by Christ Jesus, the way of salvation by repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus. The Spirit's influence in the regeneration and sanctification of the soul, and practical obedience to the will of God.

2. *The duties of religion are clear.* Comprehended in two grand precepts; supreme love to God, and unfeigned love to mankind.

3. *The counsels of the word of God are clear.* Adapted to every capacity; a wayfaring man need not err.

4. *The promises of the word of God are clear.* Nothing here ambiguous or uncertain; so clear that the weakest Christian may understand them and endorse them as his own. He rejoices in God's word,

III. On account of its fulness. In this respect the Bible is a most wonderful book. Its celestial treasures can never be fully explored, much less exhausted. Like the atmosphere, a world may inhale it, and yet it is ever fresh and invigorating. Like the light, its beams are sufficient for the family of man. Like the ocean, its channels are ever full and overflowing.

> "Enough for each, enough for all,
> Enough for evermore."

There is no dearth, no famine of spiritual provision, no lack of the food of the soul; the hungry and thirsty find this a continual, an ever-flowing fountain.

IV. On account of its minuteness and particularity. It is a book for the great mass of men; God's gift to the whole race of mankind. But it is equally a book of detail. It meets the particular circumstances and the diversified events of life; circumstances of adversity and trial, Ps. ix. 18, cxlvi. 9. Of affliction and bereavement, Ps. xxxiv. 19, xlvi. 1. Of temptation and depression, 1 Cor. x. 13. Of sorrow and suffering, John i. 9; 2 Cor. i. 4. Of slander and persecution, Matt. v. 11. Of perplexity and peril, Ps. liv. 7. O yes, the good man will find counsels, examples, and promises, to suit every condition in which he may be placed. He rejoices in God's word,

V. On account of its truth and certainty. It cannot be falsified; it cannot alter or fail, therefore the confidence may be entire and unvarying; the glory of God's truth and immutability render it essentially true and certain. "It abideth for ever."

APPLICATION.

1. Let this word be the choice of your heart.

2. Let it dwell in you richly.

3. Have recourse to it in all scenes of perplexity and trial.

4. Honor its divine Author by a constant study of its contents, and implicit faith in its great truths.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF REVELATION.

"They have Moses and the prophets."—Luke xvi. 29.

Our text is the reply of Abraham to the rich man in torments who desired an extraordinary messenger to be sent for the conversion of his brethren. He supposed that a messenger from the dead would arouse them from their state of lethargy and sin, and having heard him they would repent. To this Abraham replies, "They have Moses and the prophets," their writings are amply sufficient. In them are propounded the great truths of religion. They contain the revealed will of God, and are adapted to meet the condition of sinful men; and if they fail to enlighten, convince, and save them, neither would a messenger from the dead succeed. If the law and the prophets were thus sufficient, how fully must that book be so, which in addition to these, contains also the discourses and life of Jesus, and the writings of the apostles! We fairly then deduce this leading idea from the text, that the revelation given in the holy scriptures, is characterized by perfect sufficiency.

I. It is sufficient in the knowledge it communicates. It reveals to us the true knowledge of the nature, perfections, and

will of God. It reveals to us the knowledge of man's original condition, his primeval state, his fall, and consequent misery and ruin. It reveals to us the way of our recovery by the intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world. It reveals the character, offices, work, and doctrines of the Redeemer. It reveals clearly the way of salvation. It reveals to us the doctrines of the resurrection of the dead, and of an eternal state of future existence. It reveals the glories of the heavenly world as the dwelling-place of the righteous forever. It reveals a state of future wo as the punishment of the impenitent and ungodly.

II. It is sufficient in the duties it prescribes. A perfect rule of life. It prescribes the duties of all classes towards each other. Of monarch and subjects; of rulers and the people; of masters and servants; of parents and children; of the rich and poor. It reveals the duties which are involved in self-government and self-cultivation. The duties which have direct respect to the blessed God. Fear, honor, trust, praise, worship, obedience, love, delight, &c. It gives rules for the regulation of the conduct, of the tongue, of the thoughts, of the desires, &c. It directs us as to the duties we owe to our families, our country, and the world. It shows us how we should treat our friends and our foes. It instructs us as to our food, and dress, and recreations, and business. In one word, it gives a direct response to the interrogatory, "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?"

III. It is sufficient in the motives it presents. To enforce obedience to its requirements it refers us,—to the dignity of our nature—to the internal peace of a good conscience—to the enjoyment of the divine favor—to the abiding blessing of the Almighty—to the benign influence of a merciful providence—to the superintending care of our heavenly Father—to the ministrations of angels—to a hopeful and tranquil death—to an immortality of joy and blessedness—to the eternal beatific vision, and the crown of glory that fadeth not away. Motives richer, greater, higher, or more durable cannot be presented to the human mind.

IV. It is sufficient in the cautions and admonitions it furnishes. It reveals all the sources of evil and peril to which we are exposed,—the deceitfulness of sin, the plague of the human heart; the blandishments of the world; and the wiles of the devil. It admonishes us as to the evil of self in all its varieties of form,—self-love, self-approbation, self-confidence, self-pleasing. It admonishes us as to the dangers of presumption. The evils of spiritual sloth, and the perils of procrastination. It admonishes us as to the brevity of life, the uncertainty of time, the probable nearness of death, and the realities of the judgment day.

V. It is sufficient in the promises and threatenings it proclaims. The promises of revelation are precious, great, and innumerable. One vast chain of more than golden worth, composed of links adapted to every state and circumstance of life, death, and eternity. "The promise of the life that now is," &c. One great promise including the whole; the enjoyment of God as the portion of the soul: "I am thy God." "Heirs of God." Threatenings of the most fearful and overwhelming description. Threatenings of the divine disapprobation in this life. His continued daily anger; his wrath in the expulsion of the sinner at death; his fiery indignation forever and ever. A hell enkindled with the breath of an incensed Deity.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. We ask, what more can responsible man require than a volume of such comprehensive fulness, such complete sufficiency?

2. What could a messenger from the dead reveal that is not fully declared in the scriptures.

3. If the scriptures fail to enlighten men and to convince of sin, and lead men to repentance, equally so would the communications of one from the dead.

4. How inexpressibly precious is the Bible!

THE SCRIPTURES THE WORD OF CHRIST.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."—Col. iii. 16.

Christ is emphatically the light and glory of the sacred oracles. In the field of revelation Christ is the hidden pearl of peerless worth. In this system of divine

truth Christ is the sun and centre. The Bible is a book of history, narratives, incidents, doctrines, laws, ordinances, precepts, and promises; but in all these senses, Christ is vitally and essentially pervading, beautifying, and giving value and supreme excellency to the whole. Let us then consider the scriptures as the word of Christ, and then the counsel the text administers. Let us consider the scriptures,

I. As the word of christ.

They are so,

1. *As he is the Author of them.* Many of the revelations of the Old Testament were made expressly by him. Thus, in several instances to Abraham, and Jacob, and in an especial manner to Moses. The angel of Jehovah was none other than Christ, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and engaged to be with him, and said, "I will be thy mouth, and teach thee what to say;" Exod. iii. 2; xii. 4–12. The spirit which dwelt in the prophets is also described as the spirit of Christ, 1 Pet. i. 11. Christ also promised to be with the disciples and apostles, and to bring all things to their remembrance. Paul received his gospel as a revelation from Jesus Christ. And John describes the visions of the Apocalypse as "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," Rev. i. 1.

The scriptures are the word of Christ,

2. *As they refer to his works, character, and glory.* They commence with the magnificent works of creation, and these were all the productions of the "Word," by whom all things were made, &c. They present to us the marvellous manifestations of his providential doings in the emancipation of Israel, in overruling the events of nations, and in the general government of the universe; for "he upholdeth all things by the word of his power." He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Especially they reveal his stupendous achievements in the redemption of mankind. Hence he was predicted of, and promised as such, immediately on the entrance of sin into the world. He was also typified and shadowed forth in all the ceremonial institutions of the law. And as the burden of prophecy it is emphatically affirmed, "Unto him gave all the prophets witness." The New Testament scriptures open to us his advent, his life, his work, his miracles, his sufferings, his death, and his resurrection and ascension into heaven.

The scriptures are the word of Christ,

3. *As they reveal his dignity and offices.* His true and proper deity, Phil. ii. 6. His dignified and pure humanity, Heb. iv. 15. His office of prophet and teacher, Luke iv. 18. His office as priest and sacrifice, Heb. ix. 26. His office as king and ruler, Rev. i. 5.

4. *As they reveal to us the saving benefits of Christ.* Illumination, as he is the light of the world. Divine knowledge, as he is the great teacher, who "brought life and immortality to light by the gospel;" who also revealed the Father. Pardon of sin, for he is exalted expressly to give repentance and remission of sin. Holiness—"His blood cleanseth from all sin." Acceptance with God—"For we are accepted in the Beloved." Grace to keep and sanctify—"His grace is sufficient," &c. He is the source of all strength and ability to his people. Eternal life—"The gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." The resurrection of the body, and a glorious entrance into heaven, &c.—"Who is the resurrection and the life," and "who shall change our vile bodies," &c. Who shall say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," &c.

5. *As they reveal to us the true and the only way of receiving Christ.* By the knowledge of his word; by the influences of his Spirit; by the exercises of repentance towards God; by a vital faith in his own name and word. How appropriately then is the Bible the word of Christ! He is, indeed, the Alpha and the Omega, the sum and the substance, the all and in all of divine revelation. Withdraw Christ and the soul departs, and only the inanimate corpse remains. Withdraw Christ and the glory vanishes, and the scriptures would be as the original state of matter before the creation—dark, without form, and void. Notice, then,

II. The counsel the text administers. Let the word of Christ "dwell in you richly," &c.

1. *Let it be received into your hearts.* Not merely read or heard, but meet with a hearty reception. Not merely into the understanding or memory, but into the fervent affections of the soul. Received as good news, as good tidings, as the word of eternal life.

2. *Let it abide in your souls.* Have a residence, a permanent abode. Not visit

or tarry, as a guest, but dwell, be within us, as the soul is in the body. Be within us on all occasions and seasons, and for all spiritual purposes.

3. *It is to be abundantly within us.* Dwell in you "richly," or plenteously. In its rich variety; in its rich fulness; in its enriching plenitude; making us rich in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the experimental enjoyment of grace.

4. *It is to dwell within us in all wisdom.* In all the variety of wisdom which it imparts, and enabling us wisely to benefit by all the instruction it communicates. To become enriched with the wisdom that cometh from above, and finally made wise unto salvation.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the gracious character of the Christian revelation.* "Word of Christ." Full of the love of God to us, as evidenced in the gift of his beloved Son, Jesus Christ. A revelation of mercy and compassion to wretched, perishing sinners.

2. *The claims it has upon our sacred and grateful regards.* How it should be revered, and prized, and loved. How we should read, and study, and meditate on its blessed and all-glorious truths.

3. *The appropriate use of the scriptures.* To dwell in the heart; to fill us with divine knowledge; to influence the hidden springs of the soul; to enlighten and sanctify the mind.

4. *The methods by which these great ends may be secured.* Receive the word of Christ with great humility; in a docile, teachable frame of mind; with a lowly spirit. To receive it in the exercise of unwavering faith: to obey its holy injunctions, and thus realize its saving benefits.

THE METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

"His delight is in the law of the Lord."—PSALM i. 2.

A GREAT portion of the word of God is written in the language of metaphor and comparison. The sacred writers often clothed their thoughts in language borrowed from the rich oriental scenery by which they were surrounded. The great Teacher adopted this mode of instruction in an eminent degree. He scarcely ever spake but in the language of parable or simile. The word of God itself is often thus presented to our attention. And in this way the sanctified imagination enjoys peculiar pleasure and delight, in meditating on its rich and hallowed pages. Hence it is written, "His delight is in the law of the Lord." The metaphorical representations of the scriptures may be classified.

I. BY SIMILITUDES BORROWED FROM KINGS, LEGISLATORS, AND JUDGES. Hence it is a royal law. "The law of the Lord," containing the commandments of the supreme Jehovah, and clothed with divine authority and power. Hence it is also repeatedly represented as statutes, and testimonies, and judgments, forming a code of enactments for the regulation of the heart and life of man. It is also described as counsels, or wisdom, given by a teacher to the ignorant and unlearned, that they may know the will of the Most High. Observe,

II. THE SIMILITUDES BORROWED FROM EARTHLY TREASURES. Hence the word is called precious, and of more value than thousands of gold and silver. "I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above much fine gold." Here the purity, solidity, durability, and therefore preciousness of the scriptures are intended. It is also written, "Thy words are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth," Psalm xii. 6. Here the pure unalloyed character of the word is intended, also its unfailing certainty and value. The psalmist also speaks of the word as imparting a joy equal to that of the man who findeth "great spoil," Psalm cxix. 162. In the scriptures are treasures of light, comfort, peace, joy, and glory. Treasures that never can be corrupted or stolen, or be a source of evil to the possessor. Treasures that enrich both for time and eternity.

III. THE SIMILITUDES BORROWED FROM THE WORKS OF NATURE. Heavenly, pure, radiant as light, and equally adapted to the mental and moral vision of mankind, Psalm cxix. 105. Warm, penetrating, and purifying as fire, Jer. xxiii. 29. Beautiful and plenteous as the dew; sweet, and refreshing, and essential as the rain; fertilizing as the stream, Isaiah lv. 10; Deut. xxxii. 2.

IV. THE SIMILITUDES BORROWED FROM THE NECESSARIES OF HUMAN LIFE. Divine truths are described as precious seed. The word of God is represented as bread, the

staff of life, by which the soul lives. The prophet says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." Job says, "I have esteemed thy word more than my necessary food," Job xxiii. 12. The blessings of the gospel are likened by the prophet to waters and also to milk, which are freely offered without money and without price. "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2. It is also said to be sweet as honey, yea, as the honey-comb, Psalm xix. 10.

V. SIMILITUDES BORROWED FROM WEAPONS OF WAR, AND ARTICLES OF IMPORTANT USE. It is the Christian's sword, by which he both defends himself, and overcomes his enemies in the fight of faith. It is described as the quiver of the Saviour's arrows, by which he rides forth gloriously, his enemies falling under him, Psalm xlv. 4, 5. It is God's hammer, by which he breaks the rocky hearts of men, Jer. xxiii. 29. It is the Christian pilgrim's staff, and the rod of God's strength sent out of Zion, Psalm xxiii. 4, cx. 2. It is likened by the apostle to a glass in which is beheld the transforming glory of the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 19; and also in which we may see our true character and condition, James i. 23.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. It is our duty to be intimately conversant with the word of God. This can only be the result of constant reading and meditation. Diligence is essential to an intimate and extensive acquaintance with the treasures of divine truth.

2. The meditating in God's law is associated with true delight to the spiritual mind. It is an exercise mentally elevating, as well as productive of moral profit to the soul. Here is abundant matter for mental research and spiritual investigation.

3. We should be careful to observe that there be a corresponding influence produced by a constant perusal of divine truth on our spirit and life. Do we make the scriptures the rule of our conduct? Do we obey the divine statutes? listen to the divine counsels? value these celestial treasures? live upon this spiritual food? Do we use the word of God as a part of the Christian armor? Do we lean upon this staff? Do we take it as our living heritage, and portion forever?

4. What pleasure, instruction, and profit those forego who live in the neglect of God's blessed word! Let us emulate the character, "Whose delight is in the law of the Lord."

PRACTICAL USE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."—PSALM cxix. 11.

VARIOUS are the benevolent designs of God in favoring us with the holy scriptures. They are designed for our information, revealing what could not otherwise be known. They are designed for our instruction or tuition in the great principles of true religion; for our correction, warning, counsel, and comfort. But they are designed, also, to exert a practical influence on our hearts and lives. And this use of the divine word is that to which David refers when he says, "Thy word have I hid," &c. Observe the course the psalmist piously adopted, and the holy design that course of action involved.

I. THE COURSE THE PSALMIST PIOUSLY ADOPTED. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart." Now, the reception of the divine word, its perusal, meditation on it, love to it, and delight in it, are necessarily included. To hide the word of God in our heart,

1. *Implies diligent desire to understand it.* It can only benefit us as we ascertain its true signification. We must know the meaning of the word spoken to us. "Understandest thou what thou readest?" was the necessary question to the devout Ethiopian, who was reading the prophet Isaiah. To understand the word of God often requires mental labor and diligent research. We shall be often assisted by ascertaining the occasion, design, and general scope of the writer, and especially by comparing scripture with scripture. The Bible is often its own expositor. See 1 Pet. i. 10, 11.

2. *It implies a storing up the word in our memories.* We read of some who "laid them up in their hearts," Luke i. 6. Mary also kept "his sayings in her heart." We are exhorted to give the more earnest heed to the things, &c. "lest at any time we let them slip." We should often have a remembrance of God's blessed word, laying it up richly in our souls.

3. *It implies an experimental acquaintance with the power of the word.* To know

the truth and sweetness of the word by our own experience of it—to have it incorporated with our feelings and enjoyments—to be illumined by it, controlled by it, comforted by it—to know its strengthening, sustaining, and sanctifying influence. In this way it must be hid in the heart. As seed in the ground—as leaven in the meal—as treasure in the cabinet—as the soul in the body.

4. *The highest esteem and value for the word.* We only lay up and conceal what is precious and of great worth. True attachment to the word involves a value for it more than we have to gold and silver, or even to our necessary food. It must be the joy and rejoicing of our heart, the soul's dearest treasure and most abiding heritage and portion. Notice,

II. THE HOLY DESIGN THAT COURSE OF ACTION INVOLVED. "That I might not sin against thee." Richly and deeply lodged in the heart, the word of God is our preservative from sin. By this the young man cleanseth his way; by this the work of sanctification is carried on; by this we are built up and made meet for the celestial inheritance, &c. But it keeps from sin,

1. *By the counsels it imparts.* It apprizes us of our peril, our enemies, our weakness, our defence, our only help. It shows us the way of peace and safety, and its directions are clear, direct, and infallible. God guides his people by his counsels.

2. *By the threatenings it denounces.* Against formality, hypocrisy, spiritual sloth, forsaking the good way, and drawing back to our first sinful state. Now these threatenings must be remembered, that in the day of temptation we may avoid the things which would be destructive to our peace.

3. *By the promises it makes.* These form a very extensive part of the divine word. They are various, precious, and numberless. What want or condition is not anticipated in these? They are designed as so many rich clusters of the precious grapes of Canaan, for our refreshment on our way thither. How often faith would fail, hope decline, and joy cease, but for these! These are the steps of the celestial ladder by which we ascend to the heavenly state. Oh! let these promises be hidden in your hearts, that they may avail you in all the changing scenes of your earthly pilgrimage, &c. Now, these promises will preserve us from sinning against God by yielding to carnal doubts and unbelieving fears.

4. *By the practical duties it enjoins.* Religion enters into all the circumstances and concerns of life. Every state and condition has its practical duties. Now the word is the Christian's directory, not only showing the evils to be avoided, but the requirements God demands. Here God speaks, and says, "This is the way," &c. That we may not practically err or deviate, how necessary that this word of laws, and statutes, and ordinances, be hidden in the heart!

5. *By the strength it communicates.* The word of God gives spiritual power and might to the soul. This is the food of the soul. By this we appropriate Christ Jesus, in all his merits and benefits, and grow stronger and stronger in divine things. It commands and leads us to the source of obedient ability. It shows us what is to be done, and how we may do it. It directs in the Christian course, and gives power to run without wearying, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Is the word of God hidden in the recesses of your hearts? Are you increasing this mental and moral store?

2. A regular and methodical use of the word will greatly aid you in this work. Lay it up regularly, &c.

3. The despisers and neglecters of the word must perish.

THE SCRIPTURES THE TRUE AND LEGITIMATE SOURCE OF APPEAL

"To the law and to the testimony."—ISAIAH viii. 20.

OUR subject is connected with admonitory counsel, not to visit those who professed to have familiar spirits, &c.; but urges this great truth, that people should seek unto their God, and not the living seek instruction from the dead. Then follows the text, "To the law and to the testimony." By the law is here meant the great law of God, that which he has clothed with his divine and absolute authority. By the testimony is intended the doctrines and coun-

sels of God's blessed word. The scriptures contain both the law and the testimony, and are therefore the true and legitimate source of appeal in all matters of religion. Let us notice,

I. SOME OF THE STANDARDS TO WHICH MANY APPEAL IN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS.

1. *Some appeal to ancient traditions.* These are often obscure, easily corrupted, and frequently contradictory.

2. *To learned councils.* But these were but councils of fallible men, never perfectly agreed, one council anathematizing another.

3. *To systems of theological articles of faith.* All these are human productions, and partake of all the infirmities of our nature. There is not an absurd error or custom, which has not found a place in some theological system, or in the rites of some learned church. It is also evident, that all these are useless in preventing variety of opinion, or in effecting uniformity of religious sentiment.

4. *The avowed creeds of the sectarian denominations of the church of Christ.* All these stand arrayed in opposition to each other—the Romish, and Lutheran, and Greek church. The churches of England and Scotland, Calvinists and Arminians, Baptists and Pædo-Baptists, &c. These endless creeds would tend only to confuse the bewildered inquirer. Then let us consider,

II. THE DIVINE SOURCE OF APPEAL PRESENTED IN THE SCRIPTURES, "To the law and to the testimony." Now this is the source,

1. *Of infallible truth.* Every word of God is pure and true. Men's expositions may be erroneous; but the text itself is from God, the revelation of his mind to men.

2. *Of perfect and comprehensive truth.* Truth in glorious plenitude. Truth on all religious subjects. Truth for all men's moral exigencies.

3. *Of plain and lucid truth.* How striking the contrast between the divine simplicity of the scriptures in the main, and some of the explications and explanations of men who have labored to expound it! All essential truths are within the reach of the unlearned, and adapted to the lowest capacities of mankind, "A wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." Then observe,

III. THE USE WE SHOULD MAKE OF THIS DIVINE SOURCE OF APPEAL.

1. *Here we should test all doctrines.* No article of faith should be professed or maintained, unless we have brought it fully and fairly "to the law and to the testimony."

2. *Here we should test all ordinances.* Nothing can be binding, however apparently pleasing, instructive, or edifying, unless it is presented to us in the law or in the testimony. Customs, plausibility, should weigh nothing in these matters.

3. *Here we should test our experience.* Knowing and feeling as those did, or merely as persons whose diaries we have read, is valueless. Here are traits of character revealed in the word of God. Have we the experience of the holy persons exhibited in the divine word? Do our joys, and hopes, and desires, respond to the requirements of the oracles of truth? Have we the spirit and disposition recommended in the Bible?

4. *Here we must test our practical character.* Have we the image of God's children? the temper and conversation urged in the pages of the law and the testimony? Are we the subjects of its benedictions, or the subjects condemned and threatened in the divine law?

5. *Here we must test our joys and expectations.* Every holy grace and feeling has its counterfeit; so that to guard against self-deception, our joys and hopes must be brought to the law and to the testimony. Do they take their rise as revealed in God's word. Have they features of purity as marked in the divine record? Are our joys and hopes spiritual, self-abasing? Do they tend to our furtherance in personal holiness? Do they lead us to heavenly contemplations? Is Christ the source of our unspeakable joy, and within us the hope of glory?

OBSERVATIONS.

1. A neglect of the holy scriptures is one of the deplorable features of our times. Persons are often well acquainted with the creeds and catechisms, sermons and hymns, of their denomination, and know little comparatively of God's blessed word. How second-hand are such views of truth! How easily shaken such professors! How poor in spiritual consolations!

2. Honesty of heart, and candor of spirit, are essential to a right appeal to the law

and to the testimony. Without these we shall remain in the trammels of our sectarian peculiarities and assumptions.

3. A return to scripture appeals must precede the introduction of the Saviour's millennial kingdom and glory. How desirable that Christians of all denominations should lay aside their sectarian phraseology, and adopt the pure and unerring words of the Holy Spirit! Christians should not only mind the same thing, but follow the same rule, speaking always the truth in love.

ON READING THE SCRIPTURES.

"How readest thou?"—Luke x. 26.

Happy is that people who possess in their own tongue the oracles of eternal truth. This has been our eminent privilege for ages past; but to avail ourselves of the advantages this privilege holds out, we must possess the ability of reading. In past times, education, even of an inferior order, was limited to the few; now, through the diffusion of knowledge and progress of truth, the first elements of instruction are open to the many; but we may have the book, and the ability to read it, and yet the manner may be so defective and ill-adapted, that little benefit may be derived. Let us then contemplate the proper method of reading the holy scriptures, and enforce that method by several considerations.

I. Notice the proper method of reading the holy scriptures.

We should read the scriptures,

1. *With profound veneration for their divine Author.* This is the book of God; the only book he has written; full of his own mind and will; sent in infinite condescension to our ignorance, weakness, and misery. A book that treats of the divine character, and works, and glory. How, then, ought it to be treated? Lightly, flippantly, merely as a human composition? Surely not! The Jews in this may be held up as truly worthy of our imitation; we say nothing as to slowness of manner, or posture of body, but at all events, there should be true reverence and veneration of mind.

2. *With a deep consciousness of our own unworthiness.* A self-righteous person cannot be instructed, delighted, or benefited by the perusal of God's word. The whole volume treats of human depravity and worthlessness; it is designed to empty the mind of self, in all its variety of modifications. In this spirit only shall we value its humiliating truths, and gratefully receive its tidings of mercy and grace. We should read the scriptures,

3. *With exemplary diligence and constancy.* Much truth lies on the surface of the sacred page, but infinitely more in the deep mine of its profound resources. It cannot be accurately understood without mental labor—without study and reflection—without holy meditation. In this work especially, the diligent only can be enriched; with this diligence there should be united untiring constancy; the psalmist meditated therein, day and night. This must be our closet book, the family daily portion. It is profitable to have periods and seasons for the exercise of this delightful duty.

4. *With an earnest desire to learn by what we read.* Many read the word merely to be amused; others as a matter of course or of mere duty; some, again, read to establish more deeply their own theological opinions, or consult the Bible as a work of reference. The Christian reader should peruse its pages to know and learn what God has spoken—what the Spirit has revealed—what are the truths therein taught. Thus we cannot fail to grow and improve by our reading. Thus God's word is honored, and our own profit inevitably secured. We should read,

5. *With a holy purpose to exemplify our reading in our life and conversation.* Narratives of scripture will furnish both models for imitation, and beacons for warning. The doctrines of revelation will be believed—the precepts obeyed—the promises embraced—the privileges realized. Thus the word of God would be incorporated with our souls, as food is with our bodies, living, speaking, and acting in us, and by us. By this mode of reading the mind will be enlightened, the heart changed, and the life regulated.

6. *With fervent prayer for the Spirit to sanctify the word to our profit.* The Spirit must be sought to inspire with love to the word—to give us clearness and quickness of moral perception—to enable us to treasure it up in our hearts—to fill us with the spirit of humble faith in its blessed truths.

II. Let us urge this method of reading by several considerations.

1. *By the evils arising from a careless*

eading of the scriptures. These are numerous; God is dishonored—the mind is uninstructed, or more probably initiated in error. Thus one of God's especial blessings is abused and perverted, and our guilt greatly enhanced and aggravated.

2. *By the blessings we shall derive from such a perusal.* Increasing knowledge and understanding; a clear and harmonious apprehension of the divine mind; a certain and confidential acquaintance with the truth as it is in Jesus; an abiding sense of the divine approbation; a holy growth in the work of heart sanctification, John xvii. 17; an avoidance of the snares and fascinations of the present evil world; a holy meetness for the inheritance of eternal life.

3. *Thus only can we render a satisfactory account for the possession of the scriptures at the last day.* Of this book we are stewards, and as such, every one must give an account to God.

APPLICATION.

1. Address the neglecters of this book.
2. Admonish the careless reader.
3. Ask the question of each, "Understandest thou what thou readest?"

THE EXISTENCE, &c. OF GOD.

"One God."—1 Cor. viii. 6.

The first principle in theology is the existence of one supreme, independent, and blessed God. Against this first essential truth much has been spoken and written. In the days of the psalmist there were skeptical men who said in their hearts, "There is no God." In all ages and countries disciples of this school have lived, and reiterated the same dogmas of unbelief. These dogmas have been met by an almost endless variety of incontrovertible reasoning; and if unbelief has produced no other result, it has led the wise, and the great, and the good, to enter the arena of controversy, and to do great service to the interests of truth, by presenting this and other essential doctrines in a clear and convincing light to the world. Let us ask with reverence a few questions concerning the Being referred to, and then examine some evidences as to his existence.

I. Let us ask with reverence a few questions concerning the Being referred to. "God."

1. *What is meant by God?* We mean the first great intellectual cause of all things; the source of all existence; the originator of the world, and all that it contains.

2. *What ideas do we entertain of his essence?* We cannot form any just ideas of his essence beyond what has been revealed to us. We judge, however, from the only source of correct knowledge, that he is a spiritual intelligence, and, therefore, incorporeal in his nature.

3. *What notions have we of his attributes and perfections?* We conceive of God as possessing every perfection, and as infinite in all his attributes.

(1.) That as to his being, he is independent, self-existent, and eternal.

(2.) That as to space, his ubiquity filleth all things.

(3.) As to knowledge, he is acquainted with all creatures and events.

(4.) That as to power, he can do all things.

(5.) That he is holy, righteous, just, and true.

(6.) That he is good, bountiful, and gracious.

(7.) Merciful and compassionate. And that,

(8.) In all his natural and moral attributes, in all his will, and mind, and essence, and ways, he is immutable. But each of those must have a separate definition, proof, and illustration.

4. *What conclusions do we arrive at in reference to his greatness and perfections?* That he is a being of unmixed good, the source of all excellency, of all light and blessedness. That he cannot be the author of darkness or moral evil; but, as to the grandeur of his being and infinite glories, we cannot by any amount of research find out God, or know him to perfection. Finite cannot fully grasp or comprehend that which is infinite; so that the immensity of God's glory and perfections must be ever above the reach of finite created beings, even of the brightest order of intellectual greatness. How admirably has the poet expressed the insufficiency of human reason to grasp this immense and overwhelming theme:

"But I lose myself in him,
In light ineffable; come, then,
Expressive silence, muse his praise

II. LET US EXAMINE SOME EVIDENCES AS TO HIS EXISTENCE.

1. *We refer to the works of nature.* The eternity of these is an absurdity; their self-organization a still greater absurdity; their accidental formation the greatest absurdity of all. Here obviously there must have been a creator; one having prior existence; power, knowledge, skill: for in creation there is vastness, beauty, harmony, design, adaptation. The heavens, the earth, the animal creatures, especially man, all display the exercised power, wisdom, and goodness of a first cause. All creation witnesseth as to God's being and glory.

2. *The preservation and government of the world.* The universe is sustained; all parts of it are under specific and absolute laws. The regularity of the seasons, the wants of all creatures, are met with bountiful supplies suited to their nature and uses. There is no confusion nor jarring in the universe. But all this involves the idea of superintendence and arrangement, power and skill. To account for these irrespective of God's existence is impossible.

3. *The deep impressions of this truth which have been evidenced by mankind in all ages of the world.* The mind, in the exercise of its emotions of veneration and awe, has generally recognised a superior, unknown, vast Intelligence. The fears of men, the hopes of men, the desires of men, all seem to recognise, though sometimes confusedly, the existence of God. Enlightened philosophers of all countries, the savage American Indians, &c., have equally had these impressions, convictions, and emotions. Hence the whole system of idol homage and worship. Hence the innumerable rites and ceremonies, &c.

4. *The opposite sentiment is so fraught with absurdity and inexplicable confusion.* Let a man contemplate a universe without a creator—an intellectual creature without an intellectual source of being, a world without a preserver, ruler, &c. Such a contemplation would tend to confound and overwhelm the reasoning powers, and would throw man into a condition of inextricable doubt and uncertainty.

5. *The influence of atheistical opinions on the minds and manners of mankind.* These opinions have led to national lawlessness, terror, and confusion; to domestic strife and wretchedness; to personal viciousness, pollution, and cruelty. With the establishment of these sentiments human responsibility evaporates, and man is left uncontrolled except by the feeble statutes of creatures like himself. The heavens, the earth, animate creation, the human mind, the convictions of all nations, all cry aloud, in a language consonant with reason itself, that there is "One God."

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. *The folly of atheism.* Only the fool saith "There is no God," and this is consummate, egregious folly.

2. *The absurdity of acknowledging his being, and yet denying his providence and superintendence of human affairs and human responsibility.*

3. *The madness of acknowledging both his being and government, and yet living without him.* As though he saw us not; as though he were not holy and just; as though he would not judge us.

4. *The first essential principle of true religion.* To know God, in his nature, attributes, character, and will.

THE NATURAL PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

"Know that the Lord he is God, there is none else beside him."—DEUT. iv. 35.

THE unity of God is a subject much insisted on, both in the writings of the Old and New Testaments. The Jehovah of the universe is one, and there is none other beside him. It seems self-evident that there can only be one eternal, self-existent, independent, supreme Being. God is also described in his word, as a spirit; not a material or corporeal being. Inertness, extension, and divisibility, seem essentially to belong to matter, but none of these can be applied to Jehovah. As a spiritual being, God is invisible, whom no man hath seen or can see. God is self-existent and independent; there is none above him, none before him; none essential to his glory. Let us just glance at those perfections which are described as the natural perfections of Deity.

I. GOD IS ETERNAL. Not only prospectively, as angels, or the soul of man; but retrospectively, as one who never *began* to exist, but who ever was, and is, and is to come. "Even from everlasting to ever

asting," &c., Ps. xc. 2, cii. 27; 1 Tim. . 17.

II. GOD IS IMMUTABLE. Whose essential nature is unchangeable; "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He is immutable in his own nature and perfections. Immutable in his counsels, and mind, and wisdom, and will. He is only said to repent in condescension to our feeble capacities, for he is "the Lord, and changeth not," Mal. iii. 6; James i. 17.

III. GOD IS OMNIPOTENT. Possessing all power to do whatsoever it pleaseth him. This power is especially manifested in the overwhelming wonders of creation. In the rule and dominion of the world. It was also put forth in our redemption by Christ Jesus. It is exerted in the sinner's conversion. Will be displayed in the resurrection of the dead, and in the inflictions of wrath on the impenitent forever, Psalm lxxvi. 10, lxii. 11.

IV. GOD IS OMNIPRESENT. That is, his immensity pervades the universe, and filleth all things. It appears that the presence of Deity should be as infinite as his works, and as infinite as his rule and dominion. The ancient doctrine of the unknown spirit being the life of the world, is an imperfect representation of the omnipresence revelation makes known. How sublimely this is presented to us by the psalmist, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit," &c., Psalm cxxxix. 7. And God asks, "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" Jer. xxiii. 24.

V. GOD IS OMNISCIENT, OR INFINITE IN KNOWLEDGE. He is everywhere present to know, and discern, and observe. His omniscience extends to all space, and to all creatures. It also embraces all that is past, all that is present, and all that is to come. With God nothing is doubtful, or perplexed, or contingent. He knows all clearly, precisely, and infallibly, Psalm cxxxix. 6; Acts xv. 18.

VI. GOD IS ALL-WISE. God is the truly wise Being, the source of all knowledge and intelligence. His wisdom is displayed in all his works. The heavens display the glory of this attribute in an especial degree. The grand and vast solar system, regulated by such simple yet sublime laws. The earth; the animal creatures; man in his complex character; the whole of God's works are replete with the exercise of divine wisdom. Everywhere we see design, arrangement, method, adaptation. There is no deficiency—nothing superfluous—nothing redundant. How brilliantly it shines forth in the pages of revelation! Well may we exclaim, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all," Psalm civ. 24; see Rom. xi. 33.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. *How glorious a being is God!* How majestic his character; how venerable his name; how reverential should be our spirit and conduct towards him! With what awe should we meditate on his perfections and works!

2. *What an object of confidence for the godly and devout!* The eternal, immutable God his refuge. Power of God his defence. Presence of God his security. Omniscience of God his conscious delight. The wisdom of God his support. With such a friend, how needless distressing fear and blighting care! Who can be effectually against us if he be for us? Who can subvert his counsels, frustrate his designs, or pluck us out of his hands?

3. *The subject is full of terror to the incorrigible sinner.* How terrific an enemy is God! His power to punish how awful! His resources how infinite! His presence how terrible! His unchangeableness how appalling and overwhelming!

4. *How unlike the idols of the heathen is Jehovah!* Inanimate, senseless, and vain. Ignorant and powerless, and they who trust in them are like unto them.

5. *How precious the Bible!* For here only are these perfections of the Deity clearly revealed to us. The volume of nature is grand, and teaches us the magnificence and the power of the originator; but in clearness of adaptation to the capacity of men in general is the volume of revelation. Revelation too is the best mirror for beholding the divine works.

HOLINESS OF GOD.

"Glorious in holiness."—EXOD. xv. 11.

By the holiness of God is meant the essential purity and perfection of his moral character. This attribute of Deity is often presented to our consideration in the scriptures. He often proclaimed his holiness to his ancient people, the Jews—"Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."

The seraphim and cherubim cry one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." He is said to be so holy that he cannot behold evil, nor look on iniquity. He says, by Isaiah the prophet, xliii. 15, "I am the Lord, your holy One." Now, we observe,

I. That God is holy in his nature and essence. As a perfect being he is necessarily and infinitely removed from all evil. He is the centre of perfection. His will and mind are holy; his purposes and counsels are holy. This is the supreme dignity of the divine nature, that it is perfectly holy. This constitutes the moral grandeur and beauty of God; this, in the language of the text, is his essential glory—"Glorious in holiness." God cannot be otherwise than holy, for he is as necessarily holy as he is necessarily God. Nothing could affect his holiness—it is the immutable brightness of his character, "For in him is no darkness at all."

II. God is holy in all his works. The first-born sons of glory were created in all the excellency of holiness; they are called the holy angels. In the creation of man he displayed his holiness, creating him in his perfect and upright likeness. In all the works of nature he made every thing according to the counsels of his own purity and wisdom, and pronounced the whole very good. Whatever proceedeth from his hands must of necessity be holy.

III. God is holy in his dominion and government. All the laws which relate to intellectual and moral beings must be the emanations of his holy mind. Such was the law given to the first of our race; such was the moral law, "holy, just, and good." So were all the ceremonial institutions, &c. designed to express the holy character of God, and the necessity of holiness in his creatures. However inexplicable to us the ways of God, however clouds and darkness may surround him, yet absolute purity and rectitude are the basis of his throne. He is righteous in all his ways, &c. The laws and principles of the government of God, whether affecting angels, or men, or devils, are all just and holy. There is no unrighteousness in him.

IV. God is holy in his word. Hence called "the Holy Scriptures." Every word of God is pure. His word must necessarily resemble himself, being the revelation of his holy mind. Here the holiness of God is made known to us. Without this we could not have seen it in the works of nature, &c. But the Bible is a mirror of the divine purity. Here he shines forth in all the resplendent rays of holiness. His word, also, is the perfect rule of holiness. Here are holy statutes—holy counsels—holy precepts—holy warnings—holy promises—and invitations to holiness. Here holiness is taught in all its principles, and features, and importance. It is also the instrument of holiness. It tends to the change of the character, and the sanctification of the heart. It cleanses like holy water—purifies and refines as holy fire—it renews as the pure and vital air.

V. God is holy, especially in human redemption. The great object of redemption was to exhibit the divine holiness to all creatures and all worlds. He embodied it in the obedience of his Son—he taught it in his doctrines—confirmed it by his miracles—wrote it in crimson characters with his precious blood. The end of man's redemption was his restoration to holiness—"To redeem him from iniquity." Hence the blood of the great sacrifice is represented as "cleansing from all unrighteousness."

VI. God is holy in the dispensation of his grace. The revelation of that gracious dispensation is by the holy and glorious gospel of the blessed God. He calls with a holy calling; he regenerates and makes men holy; he imparts his Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of his people; he adopts them into his holy family—he guides their feet in the way of holiness; he beautifies them with holy virtues. Within them he infuses the holy graces of his Spirit—and they are enabled to have a holy conversation, and to grow in holiness of life, by increasing conformity to his holy likeness.

VII. God will be holy in the decisions of judgment. He will then sit on the great white throne of his holiness. He will judge men by his holy law and word. His decisions, both as it regards saints and sinners, men and angels, will be in strict accordance with his holy nature.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. How greatly should God be feared by his saints! With what awe, and lowli

ness, and fear, should they draw near to worship him! How evil to use his name lightly, or to worship him with heedless levity!

2. How evil must sin be in his sight! It is the one and only thing that he abhors and hates.

3. We see why sinners must necessarily be excluded from heaven. It is God's holy place; there is his throne and attendants—it is his holy temple.

4. We see the moral grandeur of the gospel. To bring men back to holiness, and thus eventually to God, and to eternal life.

JUSTICE OF GOD.

"Just and right is He."—Deut. xxxii. 4.

Justice in God is that attribute, by which, according to the purity and rectitude of his nature, all his proceedings are based and regulated. It seems impossible to contemplate a perfect being, without ascribing to him the attribute of justice. The justice of God is repeatedly brought before us in the volume of revelation. He is termed "The Just One," the "Just Lord," "Most Just." He is said to be "without iniquity;" in him, it is said, "there is no unrighteousness; yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment." Job xxxiv. 17. The more intelligent heathen conceived it necessary to speak of God as the Just One; hence, Plato says, "God is not in anywise unjust, but so far as possible most just." Now the justice of God may be viewed,

I. In relation to himself. In the revelation of himself to mankind he has made known the holiness of his nature, and the sovereign right he has to certain prerogatives,—to be glorified, and adored, and served by all his creatures. Now none of these claims will he forego. His glory he will not give to another. He has exhibited his eternal character and will, as absolutely unchangeable, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

II. He is just to all his creatures. If pure unmixed justice be essential to God, then injustice cannot proceed from him, even as darkness cannot proceed from the orb of day. But let our thoughts be chiefly limited to his justice to mankind. Now it appears that justice requires that,

1. *He should give to mankind righteous laws.* Laws adapted to their natures, and suited to their powers and condition. The whole moral code may be evidently concentrated in these two;—supreme love to himself as the great and chief good,—and benevolent regard to our neighbor. Now these are so manifestly just and right as to need no proof. Righteous laws must,

2. *Be connected with equitable, that is, with suitable, rewards and punishments.* A good being may grant a reward superprotionate, but he cannot give less than a just equivalent. Thus the apostle says, "God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love." Hence also, it is written, "he will reward every man according to his works." It does not now require us to show that the punishment of sin, as revealed in scripture, is not beyond the demerit of the transgression. This, at present, we assume. It is essential to justice, that righteous laws, with equitable sanctions,

3. *Be strictly and impartially executed.* That there be no favoritism—no conniving at any guilt, or overlooking iniquity in any transgression. As it regards punishment, God has said, that he will by no means "clear the guilty," and that every one shall reap as they have sown, whether of the flesh, corruption, or of the spirit, life everlasting. But in the exercise of impartial justice to all, the conduct of Deity must embrace both the present and future existence of his responsible creatures. He may justly reward or punish in this state or hereafter. The doctrine of the Saviour's sacrifice does not affect this view of the divine justice, as the atonement of Christ is as essentially a display of holiness and justice, as of goodness and mercy. In the remission of sin, God appears both as a just God and a Saviour. The just, and yet through Christ the justifier of the ungodly.

III. The evidences of the divine justice are many.

1. *They are exhibited in all the laws he has given in his word.* In every enactment of the decalogue shines forth the brightness of the divine justice. The scriptures are a mirror of righteous precepts and equitable laws.

2. *The evidences of divine justice have often been signally evinced in the history of our world.* Observe the tenure of man's primeval condition—his fall and exclusion from paradise. The destruction of the old

world,—overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah,—the punishment of Pharaoh and his host,—the ruin of impenitent Jerusalem.

3. *There is the evidence of the human conscience.* That internal vicegerent which so powerfully acts upon our powers, and feelings, in responding to the divine claims; in condemning our disobedience, and in smiling upon the path of rectitude and obedience.

4. *The justice of God was most strikingly displayed in our redemption by Christ Jesus.* So just that he inexorably determined to punish sin, and did so in the sufferings of his own Son. So just that he demanded that his law should be exhibited to the universe in brightest characters, and it was so in the immaculate nature and perfect obedience of the Redeemer.

> "Here the whole Deity is known,
> Nor dares the creature guess,
> Which of the glories brightest shone,
> The justice or the grace."

5. *The justice of God will be displayed in the results of the judgment day,* when he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION.

1. A contemplation of the divine justice should produce reverential awe—holy fear—hatred to sin; and lead us to unfeigned repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Here the Christian should find reason for acquiescence in all the divine procedure.

3. The subject is fraught with indescribable terror to the impenitent sinner.

TRUTH AND FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

"A God of truth."—DEUT. xxxii. 4.

By truth in Deity, we mean that veracity of character and faithfulness of conduct by which he is what his word represents, and never acts contrary to his own engagements. A pure and just God must also be faithful and true. Some of the ancients, with very imperfect notions of God's character and glory, yet supposed him to be clothed in the attribute of truth. Hence one said, "that truth is so great a perfection of God, that if he should render himself visible unto men, he would choose light for his body and truth for his soul." And it was common for the most enlightened to describe their superior gods, as doing good to mankind and "speaking the truth." God has given a full revelation of this perfection in his holy word—to Moses he proclaimed himself abundant in goodness and truth—he is said to "keep truth for ever."—"Thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds." Now we observe,

I. GOD IS TRUE AND FAITHFUL IN THE REVELATION HE HAS GIVEN OF HIS OWN CHARACTER AND PERFECTIONS. In the spirituality of his essence—in the eternity of his self-existence—in the almightiness of his power—in the immensity of his knowledge—in the ubiquity of his person—and in all his holy, righteous, benevolent, merciful, and gracious moral perfections. We have no reason to doubt the testimony God hath given of himself.

II. GOD IS FAITHFUL AND TRUE AS IT REGARDS THE DESCRIPTION HE HATH FURNISHED OF HIS WORKS. In the records of scripture we have an account of our world's creation, Genesis i. Now there is nothing existing in the works of nature by which doubt is thrown upon that testimony—the state and the laws of our portion of the universe would tend rather to the establishment of the Mosaic account of the creation; the same remarks apply to the creation and original state of probation of our first parents, the entrance of sin, &c.

III. GOD IS TRUE AND FAITHFUL AS IT REGARDS HIS DIVINE PREDICTIONS. The revelation of future events is with God alone—a great portion of the word of God is formed of these predictions—our appeal must be to those of the past. Hence we might refer to the destruction of the old world, as revealed to Noah—the extensive posterity of Abraham—the future state, &c. of the various tribes—their possession of the land of Canaan—their captivities, sins, and final dispersion among the nations of the earth. So also those prophecies which regarded Egypt, Tyre, Nineveh, Babylon, &c. &c.—especially those prophecies which have gracious respect to the world's Redeemer—the time, the place, the manner of his advent—his ministry, offices, work, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory. We may just add the predictions published in the visions of John, regarding the Asiatic churches, &c. &c.

IV. GOD IS FAITHFUL AND TRUE IN HIS DECLARATIONS AND PROMISES. How this was insisted upon by Moses, and Joshua, and Solomon, Deuteronomy vii. 9, Joshua xxiii. 4, 1 Kings viii. 56; see also Psalm cxlvi. 6. This subject is so rich in illustration as to render choice of incidents difficult. We see it in the promissory engagement with Abraham as it regarded his son—to Moses as it regarded the deliverance of his people, &c.—to Israel often as it regarded his protection and guardian care—to the world, as it regarded the appearance of his own Son—by Jesus too, as it respected the outpouring of the Spirit—also as it regards the progress of divine truth, and the continuance of his church in the world. So also how the experience of all Christians will amply corroborate the truth of God—in forgiving their sins, renewing their hearts, giving needful grace, delivering from evil, hearing their prayers, accepting their offerings, and in communicating rich and unspeakable consolation to their souls.

V. GOD IS FAITHFUL AND TRUE IN THE EXECUTION OF HIS THREATENINGS. In the spiritual death and in the ultimate bodily dissolution of our first parents—in the disastrous results of the flood—in the excision of the Jews as a nation from their position and favor, &c.—and often in the premonitory woes and misery of his incorrigible enemies, he has threatened to drive the wicked away in his wickedness, and how often has it been realized to the very letter! Haman, Belshazzar, Herod, are a few of the many proofs of its confirmation. This will be awfully exhibited in the everlasting banishment of the wicked in the judgment of the last day.

OBSERVATIONS.

If God is clothed in faithfulness and truth,

1. *Then we ought implicitly to believe his word.* His word is the brightest reflection of his mind, and every saying, whether of comfort or terror, must come to pass. Then acceptable faith in God has respect to all he hath spoken.

2. *This subject is fraught with matter of greatest joy to the Christian.* All the declarations of mercy and goodness, and all the promises of grace and love, are yea and amen. Not one shall fail, and that because God is faithful and true:

"His truth shall firm, unshaken stay,
When heaven and earth have passed away."

3. *We see the spirit which will distinguish the true saint.* He will be the recipient and reflector of God's truth. He will speak only truth—love the truth—walk in the truth—diffuse the truth.

4. *By the truth of God we should urge sinners to flee from the wrath to come.* God is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent. Heaven and hell will bear witness to his truth forever.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

"I will make all my goodness to pass before thee."—EXOD. xxxiii. 9.

By goodness we mean the benevolence of God—that disposition of Deity which causes him to delight in making his creatures happy. This is not so much an attribute of Deity as it is his essential nature, "For God is love;" pure, unmixed, infinite love. Goodness, therefore, is rather the essential being and character of God. To this our attention is often invited in the pages of revelation—"O taste and see that the Lord is good." How great is his goodness—"Thy people delighted themselves in thy great goodness." "Thou prevent-est with the blessings of thy goodness." "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord." And in the text, "I will make my goodness to pass before thee." Let us consider goodness,

I. IN REFERENCE TO THE DIVINE CHARACTER.

II. THE MANIFESTATION OF HIS GOODNESS TO HIS CREATURES.

I. LET US CONSIDER GOODNESS IN REFERENCE TO THE DIVINE CHARACTER. We remark,

1. *That God is originally and essentially good.* The goodness of God is not derived; but is the very nature, essence, and habit of his blessed character. He is the fountain, the spring, and source of all goodness. He is essentially good as he is essentially God.

2. *God is absolutely good.* In him there is no mixture of evil—no dark shades of malevolence, or, in the words of inspiration, "No darkness at all." Just as he is

absolutely wise, and almighty, and independent, so he is perfectly and absolutely good.

3. *He is infinitely good.* Good in the most immense degree. His goodness cannot be measured or circumscribed. It is as vast and boundless as his essence. All the goodness existing in angels, and beatified saints, and the godly on earth, is but as a drop from the ocean, or as a ray of light to the beams of noonday splendor, compared with the richness and abundance of the goodness of God. Therefore, God is,

4. *Incomprehensibly good.* We cannot possibly conceive of that which is infinite, so that the goodness of God is higher than all our thoughts—"The breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God passeth knowledge," Eph iii. 19.

5. *God is immutably good.* In him there is no variableness or shadow of turning. His goodness cannot be affected either by addition or diminution; and this immutability of goodness is from everlasting to everlasting; strictly and properly eternal, even as God is eternal. But consider,

II. THE MANIFESTATION OF HIS GOODNESS TO HIS CREATURES. He said to Moses, "I will make my goodness to pass before thee." The goodness of God may be considered,

1. *In its general manifestation.* In this sense the whole earth is full of it. He is good to all; he careth and provideth for every living thing; he openeth his beneficent hand, and all his creatures are supplied with needful good. Psalms xxxvi. 6; cxlv. 15, 16; civ. 21, &c. Now, of this general goodness man highly participates. The resources of creation are all for him; the numberless blessings with which this world is crowded are given to him. Every sense is met with corresponding enjoyment, every reasonable desire by the riches of God's bounty. His own frame, and the constitution of his own mind, are all adapted for enjoyment. Even his pains are monitors to warn him of his approaching peril; and for his maladies, both the surface and the interior of the earth are full of healing remedies. Now, this general goodness of God, like the atmosphere, extends to the whole earth, and to every living thing.

2. *God's special goodness is displayed to the objects of his divine complacency.* How it was manifest to our first parents in Eden! What dignity, felicity, and blessedness it conferred! How richly it is manifested to the glorified spirits and angels above! The bright effulgent beams of glory surround them—they drink of the rivers of his pleasure. At God's right hand, as the peculiar provision of his spiritual goodness, is fulness of joy, and pleasures forevermore.

3. *But the brightest displays of the divine goodness were manifested in the world's redemption.* This was the overflowing springtide of divine goodness, in which all the attributes of Deity were co-sharers in the wondrous work. "God so loved the world," &c. "He spared not his own Son," &c. Laid upon the Scr of his highest delights the sin of the world. No previous development of goodness had startled angels, but this overpowered ever. 'eir benevolent conceptions:—

> "The first archangel never saw
> So much of God before."

OBSERVATIONS.

1. *Goodness is that quality, or nature of God, in which he comes especially near to us.* His grandeur might overawe us, his power alarm, his holiness overwhelm; but in the habiliments of goodness he comes near to us as our Father. Here we may behold him as he passes by, and not be consumed.

2. *God in his goodness also draws man near to himself.* We now contemplate him with confidence. We may speak and commune. His goodness should attract us to him—bind our hearts to him—fill us with love to him—cause our hearts to overflow with grateful praise.

3. *God in his goodness should be the object of our imitation.* We should be followers of God as dear children—imbibe his spirit—evince the divine nature within us.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD TO HIS SAINTS

"Oh, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!"—PSALM xxxi. 19.

GOD'S goodness fills creation. It distinguishes all his works, and is the grand principle of his universal government. Only the obstinately rebellious deprive themselves of its rich blessings; and in this life even the unbelieving and wicked enjoy the tokens of his unlimited benevolence. But it is a most consolitary doc-

trine that he is especially good to his saints, to those who know his name, and put their trust in him. These partake of that goodness which includes the divine complacency and delight. Hence the appropriate language of the text, "How great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up," &c. God's especial and abundant goodness is laid up for his people,

I. In the counsels of his love. God's affections and delights were with his people before the world was. He predetermined the privileges they should possess, and the blessings they should enjoy. Hence, in the prospective designs of Jehovah, his kindness, and mercy, and grace, were treasured up for all who should obey the truth, and believe in his name. It is laid up,

II. In the fulness of his word. God's word is designed for the illumination and direction of mankind. It is for the benefit of the whole human race. But its precious promises, its rich consolations, its sweet assurances, its refreshing counsels, its hallowed instructions, are only efficiently enjoyed by them that fear him. Others may read, and admire, and be informed; but the saint digests, meditates, and delights in it, even as one who rejoiceth in great spoil. And who can tell the goodness which is treasured up here:—

> "It sweetly cheers our drooping hearts
> In this dark vale of tears:
> Life, light, and joy, it still imparts,
> And quells our rising fears."

This goodness is laid up,

III. In the well-ordered covenant. That covenant of mercy and grace ratified by the inexpressibly precious blood of the cross; that new and better covenant, of which Jesus is the adorable mediator. The blessings of this covenant include—the saint's high and celestial calling—his justification and remission of sins—his acceptance and peace with God—his adoption into the divine family—his perseverance and continuance in the knowledge and love of God—his triumphant death, bliss, final resurrection, and everlasting glory. Thus, exhaustless blessings are laid up in this covenant for them that fear him.

IV. In the fulness of the Mediator. In Jesus all fulness dwells. He is full of grace and truth; and this fulness, both of wisdom and love, is for the benefit of them that fear him. It is only believers who receive out of this fulness. They appropriate its riches by the exercise of continuous living faith. Now, this divine goodness, treasured up in Christ, comprehends all spiritual blessings; grace sufficient for all the exigencies of his people; that by which they have ability for every duty, comfort in every trouble, and deliverance from every peril. Christ Jesus is the grand depository of all needful good for them that fear him. God's goodness is also laid up,

V. In the arrangements of a benignant providence. God's kindly regards are identified with all the dispensations of his moral government. His dominion is an especial source of joy and gladness to his people; his providential goodness respects all that the godly man is, and has. It includes the exercise of the divine benignity to his family and dwelling—the divine care of his health and life—the divine blessing upon his basket and store—the divine direction of his steps. All the Lord's ways of providence are gracious and merciful to them that fear him. "The Lord is their shepherd," &c. I observe that the goodness of the Lord is laid up,

VI. In the eternal resources of glory. The treasures of grace are infinite and inexhaustible; how, then, shall we describe the riches of everlasting life! God has laid up dignified crowns—exalted thrones—princely sceptres—boundless inheritances—floods of meridian, celestial light—and oceans of unutterable felicity. A personal knowledge, an adequate power of contemplation, with a large, copious, and clear ability of expression, are wanting to speak rightly of the eternal goodness which God has laid up, &c.

APPLICATION.

Let the subject be a test,

1. *Of character.* Do we fear God with a holy, filial, affectionate feeling of reverence and delight in him? Our subject is limited to this class, and to this only. Let the subject,

2. *Be a source of encouragement.* To the seeking sinner and penitent inquirer O yes! to these we preach a God of infinite goodness, and one who ever waits to be gracious to the lowly and contrite, and such as tremble at his word. Let the subject fill with consolation,

3. *The hearts of the righteous.* How ex-

alted your state, how rich your privileges, how full, and sure, and exhaustless your enjoyments! Poor in yourselves, how rich in God's love! Pilgrims in the world, yet how enrapturing the hope of enjoying all that God has laid up for you in the land of bliss that is afar off!

EXCELLENCY OF GOD'S LOVING-KINDNESS.

"How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."—PSALM xxxvi. 7.

TRUE religion consists in knowing God—loving God—enjoying God—praising God. How all these traits are exhibited in the character of the psalmist—how adapted to guide, cheer, and strengthen the godly in all generations! Observe,

I. THE PIOUS EXCLAMATION.
II. THE INFERENCE DRAWN FROM IT.

I. THE PIOUS EXCLAMATION. "How excellent," &c. "Loving-kindness." God's kindness, flowing from love. One the source of the other—God is love. This is his essential nature, pure unmixed goodness. Thou art good and thou doest good. Now this is evidenced in the kindness of God towards us. It is seen in the world we inhabit. The earth is full of the kindness, &c. In the government of God, all is governed by the laws of righteous goodness. Especially in the world's redemption, Titus iii. 4. Also in the gracious dealings of God with his people in their conversion, regeneration, sanctification, comfort, &c. But the excellency of the loving-kindness of God is the subject of the psalmist's exclamation; "How excellent,"

(1.) In its infinitude—passeth knowledge.
(2.) In its freeness—pure grace.
(3.) In its superior and present sweetness.
(4.) In its unchangeableness.
(5.) In its perpetuity.

II. THE INFERENCE DRAWN FROM IT. "Therefore the children of men," &c. That is, the pious of mankind. Many are godless, careless, &c. "They that know thy name," &c.

1. *Their peril is supposed.* Danger from men, fallen spirits, storms and tempests.
2. *God is their refuge.* Shadow of thy wings—figure of the hen, or perhaps the wings of the cherubim, which covered the mercy-seat. How secure, &c.
3. *Confidence and trust are expressed.* Fly to God—dwell in God—the name of God, &c. In temptation, affliction, death, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. How God should be adored and loved!
2. Our happy privilege. Invites.
3. Sinners to come to it.

MERCY OF GOD

"Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy."—PSALM lxii. 12.

ONE of the most interesting characteristics of the Deity to fallen man is that of mercy. Angels may have noon-tide blessedness from the exercise of the divine goodness. But sinful dust and ashes overwhelmed with the misery of their state, require the interposition of mercy. Mercy in a certain sense may be considered a modification of the divine goodness, having for its objects, the guilty and the miserable. It differs from pity, as that may be called forth by the wretchedness of those who have had no share in procuring their adversities. But mercy regards its objects as miserable through their own personal guilt, and voluntary transgression. How delightful that the great and august Being we have been contemplating as holy, and just, and true, that unto him in an especial and infinite degree belongeth mercy! We might argue the divine mercifulness, from the benevolence of God, from the impress on the human conscience as to its excellency, and from the bounty which he is continually bestowing on the ungodly. But let us look at it, as it is resplendently exhibited in the volume of eternal truth. Notice,

I. THE DECLARATIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE DIVINE MERCY WITH WHICH THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ABOUND. He is the "Lord God merciful;" "Keeping mercy for thousands." His mercifulness is said to reach the heavens. He is "of great mercy;" "The Father of mercies;" "The God of all mercy." He is represented, as "rich in mercy;" that he "delighteth in mercy." We read of "his tender mercy." "The multitude of his mer

cies." His mercies are said to be "over all his works," "and his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting." And it is reiterated in his word, that his "mercy endureth for ever."

II. NOTICE SOME OF THE EXERCISES OF THE DIVINE MERCY. It triumphed in the day of man's apostacy and ruin. It was exercised towards the most notorious sinners both in the Old and New Testament times. Manasseh, Nebuchadnezzar, the woman who was a sinner, the dying thief, Saul of Tarsus. To the inhabitants of Nineveh, and to the sinners at Jerusalem. These are but a few out of the many instances of the exercise of the divine mercy. Observe,

III. THE EMBODYMENT OF THE DIVINE MERCY IN THE PERSON OF THE REDEEMER. He is emphatically "the mercy promised to the fathers." His mission was one of pure mercy. His incarnation was the advent of mercy. His offices were all identified with the intentions of mercy. His doctrines were doctrines of mercy. His invitations, yea, and even his warnings, were the rich displays of his mercy. His work in all its variety of duties was one great work of mercy. His miracles were miracles of mercy. His sufferings and death were for the opening of a wide and deep channel of mercy. His resurrection, and ascension, and pleading in heaven, are all essential to the communication of the divine mercy.

IV. THE PUBLICATION OF MERCY IN THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE GOSPEL. The gospel is the grand amnesty between God and a rebellious world; the revelation of his mercy in and through Jesus Christ. How merciful its provision—how merciful its addresses—how merciful its conditions—how free and universal is the mercy offered in the gospel! How vast the blessings of mercy which it publisheth! Mercy forgiving,—healing,—renewing,—sanctifying,—comforting,—preserving,—sustaining,—upholding,—restraining,—and finally bestowing the crown of eternal life. Salvation in its origin, progress, and consummation, is entirely of the divine mercy.

REMARKS.

1. The mercy of God is exercised in strict harmony with justice and holiness. It has been pertinently said, that justice seeks a fit object, mercy a fit occasion. Justice looks to what is deserved, mercy to what is needed. Justice is never exercised unmercifully, nor mercy unjustly. God is infinitely just in punishing the incorrigible, and infinitely merciful in pardoning the penitent sinner. There is no clashing of interests in the exercise of the attributes of Deity.

2. We observe all men are the objects of the divine mercy. Equally needing it, and to whom it is equally announced. In a state of nature, guilt is the condition of every man, from the most moral to the most debased, and all must therefore have recourse to the fountain which mercy has opened for sin and uncleanness. As it is with sinners, so is it with saints. None are too holy to dispense with mercy. It must be by the exercise of divine mercy that their salvation must be carried on from the foundation-stone, to the completion of the superstructure.

3. Mercy flows to all men through the same channel. God is merciful to no man abstractedly and alone, but to all through the mediation of the better and merciful covenant. In Christ mercy rejoiceth against judgment. In him "mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other."

4. The mercy of God is ever associated with believing penitence and prayer. A penitence which is the forsaking of all sin, and the lowly returning of the soul to God. "Let the wicked forsake his ways," &c. "Whosoever confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy." How appropriate then the prayer of the psalmist, "Have mercy upon me, O God." And of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

5. The divine mercy towards us must be the model of our mercy towards our fellow-men; see Matt. vi. 14, also xviii. 28, &c.

6. The divine mercy will be celebrated in the anthems of the redeemed forever and ever.

FORBEARANCE AND LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD.

"Forbearance and long-suffering."—ROM. ii. 4.

MERCY extended to guilty and impenitent sinners is long-suffering. Mercy restraining justly deserved wrath is forbearance.

Both of these are attributed to God in his holy word. Both forbearance and long-suffering are also inseparable from the patience of God, Rom. xv. 5. The text refers us to the riches of the forbearance and long-suffering of God. God abounds in these, is full of them, just as he abounds and overflows in mercy and goodness. Let us notice,

I. In what the forbearance and long-suffering of God consist.

II. The principles on which they are grounded.

III. The exhibitions which have been given to mankind. And,

IV. The lessons which they teach us. We ask then,

I. In what the forbearance and long-suffering of God consist. Notice,

1. *The objects of forbearance and long-suffering.* These are sinful men. They are not necessary to holy, obedient beings. All sin deserves punishment, the punishment of death. But sinners live in the midst of their sins, often for years upon years of uninterrupted transgression. Wherefore do the wicked thus live? The answer is found in the forbearance and long-suffering of God. He is slow to anger, unwilling to punish, and delighteth in mercy. Not only unconverted men, but even the children of God are also the objects of the divine forbearance. Their manifold infirmities, their numerous backslidings, their dulness and slothfulness in his service; their barrenness in the virtues and graces of holiness. All these require the extension of God's forbearance and long-suffering.

2. *In what way are forbearance and long-suffering exercised?* In the suspension of deserved punishment,—in their continuance in a state of probation,—in the supply of the divine bounties in the midst of their guiltiness,—in the invitations and means of grace which are employed for their restoration to God.

II. The principles on which they are grounded. They are not to be confounded with the indifference which some ascribe to Deity; nor to his disregard of the moral character and condition of his creatures. But,

1. *To the mercifulness of his nature.* He s rich in compassion, and he commiserates the woful condition of sinful men. He sincerely desires their well-being and salvation. He has demonstrated how he loves their souls, in the provisions of redemption, and thus he exercises long-suffering towards them.

2. *To the power which he ever possesses to punish.* By the exercise of forbearance, &c. the sinner does not thereby acquire a power to evade the threatened and justly deserved punishment. The sinner is every moment before him, always within his power; at any instant, therefore, he has only to will, and the probation of the sinner ends, and his everlasting misery commences.

3. *On his knowledge of the ultimate efficiency of the means he employs.* All the saints in heaven have been, both before and after their conversion, the subjects of the divine forbearance. How he had exercised his long-suffering to Manasseh, before the great and gracious end was accomplished! How to the dying malefactor, &c. How to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. How to the persecuting Saul, &c., &c.

4. *On the principle of displaying his justice before assembled worlds on the last day.* By this forbearance of God the sinner is left without excuse; thus every mouth will be stopped; like the man without the wedding garment, they must be speechless. Thus God will appear as the righteous governor of the world, and as the just judge of his accountable creatures.

5. *On the subserviency even of the wicked to the purposes of his providence.* The wicked are often God's sword. He sometimes employs pestilence, and earthquake, and storms, to fulfil his will in the infinitude of his righteous judgments. But he also often allows the wrath of man and the cruelty of man to be exercised in punishing one class of the guilty, and thus also to fill up their own iniquitous cup. By his forbearance also to the vilest of mankind, his people are tried and tested, their example and spirit also shine more resplendently, and an opportunity is given for the maturity of the divine image within them. In the world his people are to show forth the praises of him who has delivered them from its sinful influence and spirit.

III. Observe the exhibitions which God has given to mankind of his forbearance and long-suffering. One hundred and twenty years after the total depravity of the old world, were its guilty

inhabitants spared, 1 Pet. iii. 20. It was greatly displayed to the despotical Pharaoh. Wrath was restrained in the case of the Amorites, until their cup became full. For almost countless ages they have shone towards idolatrous lands, Hindoston, China, &c. They are exhibited daily to notorious and aged transgressors. Every living being is a monument of God's forbearance and long-suffering. Consider then,

IV. THE LESSONS WHICH THEY TEACH US.

1. *The benevolent character of God.* How truly is it manifest that God is love! How conspicuous does his goodness shine forth! How true that his tender mercy is over all his works!

2. *The grateful love which God justly claims.* Is it too much that the blessed God demands the grateful affections of the heart, the warmest emotions of the soul? If every feeling ascended to him in sacred, delightful thanksgiving, it could not be commensurate to his long-suffering and forbearance towards us.

3. *The improvement of our opportunities the subject suggests.* While he speaks in mercy let us hearken and obey, for

> "While the lamp holds out to burn,
> The vilest sinner may return."

And ought he not? is it not his duty, interest, salvation, to return?

4. *The riches of the forbearance and long-suffering of God may be exhausted.* For,

> "Mercy knows the appointed bounds,
> And turns to vengeance there."

When once the master of the feast has risen up and shut to the door, no penitency nor prayers, no agony or entreaty, will avail; and hell will be lit up with the fearful, unbearable reflection that the God whose wrath they endure, was rich in forbearance and long-suffering even towards them.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE.

"I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect."—GENESIS xvii. 1.

ABRAHAM was one of the most conspicuous and distinguished saints of the old dispensation. In all respects he was an extraordinarily godly man. His strong, self-denying faith; his prompt obedience; his family discipline; his power in prayer; his intimacy with Jehovah. Then if you look at him as the father of the faithful, as the root of the Jewish nation, and as one who stood out in bold and holy relief as a worshipper of the true God, in the midst of ignorance, superstition, and idolatry. Our text relates to the revelation God made to him when he was ninety years old. Observe,

I. THE ATTRIBUTE CLAIMED BY JEHOVAH. "I am the almighty God." This passage has been rendered God all-sufficient. Either representation will do. Both are true, and one is involved in the other. By almightiness in Deity we mean power to do whatsoever he desires to do. Whatever is fitting for a holy, wise, and good being. He cannot sin, nor love it; nor deny himself. He cannot change, &c. He can do nothing arguing inconsistency with his own blessed perfections.

1. *He is almighty in creation.* He could create an infinity of worlds. He can create without difficulty—he speaks, and it is done. The stupendous heavens are the works of his fingers. Had he pleased, he could have raised up children from the stones, &c. to Abraham. How sublime is the first chapter of Genesis, ver. 3–6, and he just *said it.* His word gave the command, and matter was modified and arranged, &c.

2. *He is almighty to govern and uphold.* "He upholdeth all things by the word," &c. It may be said, all the departments of the world have their respective laws. True, but they are *his.* Go from link to link, to the highest and last, and that is in God's hand. "He doeth according to his will among the armies," &c., Job xxvii. 7. But in the government of all things he has to provide for every existing creature. The intellectual hosts of glory,—mankind, every living thing. His kingdom ruleth over all. The eyes of all wait on him.

3. *He is almighty to redeem.* Redemption is represented as his great work. His own arm brought salvation. He made bare his holy arm. He displayed this in counteracting the powers of hell. In removing the mountains of opposition and difficulty, &c. In uniting interests which appeared at utter variance, and in opening a brilliant path-way from the gates of hell to the celestial paradise for the universal family of man.

"'Twas great to speak a world from naught,
'Twas greater to redeem."

I need not add to these observations, that he is therefore God all-sufficient. Sufficient as the protection of his saints; as their support, as their portion, as their everlasting all. Notice then,

II. THE COUNSEL GIVEN. "Walk before me," &c. Now this counsel implied,

1. *A constant recognition of God.* "Before me." Remember my eyes are upon thee. Thy bed and path. Remember I am ever near thee. Thou canst not evade, &c. Keep up a lively sense of this. It will produce holy, vigilant fear. It will produce diligent obedience. It will produce a constant desire to please me. It will also be a source of confidence. The counsel included,

2. *Progression in the divine life.* "Walk before me." Sometimes we must stand still, and see the glory of God. But experimental religion is truly progressive. "Speak unto the children of Israel," &c. "Go from strength to strength," &c. "This one thing I do," &c. "I press," &c. "Give all diligence," &c. "Be steadfast, &c. always abounding," &c.

3. *Maturity of holiness.* "Be thou perfect," or be sincere and upright. Now there was a reason for this. He had dissembled before Pharaoh. He had adopted unwarrantable means for the fulfilment of the divine promise as to a son, &c. Now God says, Be upright—sincere. Believe me entirely, always, for every thing. This integrity in some respects is the perfection of godliness, &c. But we may include in this, advancement in purity and excellency, and vigor of the graces of godliness. Also, setting the Lord always before us. Aiming at conformity to his likeness, resemblance to his image. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Also, *as* I am holy. The entire sanctification for which the apostle prays, refers to this. "I pray God that he may sanctify you wholly, body, soul, and spirit." For this we should strive, labor, pray, believe.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the invincible defence, and foundation of the Christian.* "God almighty." Well may we exclaim, "Who can harm," &c. "If God be for us who can be against us?" This consideration should animate and encourage in difficulties, in oppression, in peril. "Walk before the Almighty God," &c.

2. *A recognition of God is ever desirable.* It tends to keep us in the way of duty. Besides, it will be well done. Especially it will preserve us from self, and from the vain applause of men.

3. *Never be satisfied with past attainments.* If any ought, it was Abraham, especially when ninety years old, after serving God for more than thirty years. God thus speaks to me, to each of you, to all, "Walk before me," &c.

4. *To the sinner he says,* "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Oh hear, obey, and live.

THE GOOD AND COMPASSIONATE CHARACTER OF GOD.

"For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."—PSALM lxxxvi. 5.

To the possession of acceptable religion it is essential that we have a right knowledge of God, and of his will concerning us. Two views are extensively entertained of Jehovah, both of which are derogatory to his character, and which rob him of his glory. One of these is the exhibition of God as a being perfectly indifferent to human conduct, and who is regardless of the actions of mankind, and who will exercise indiscriminate mercy to all classes and grades of character. Well has the poet said,

"A God all mercy is a God unjust."

And the solemn declaration of God, that he will by no means spare the guilty, proves this to be one of the stratagems of the devil, and one of the deceitful fallacies of the human heart. The other view of Deity is that which clothes him in habiliments of wrath, and burning with hot displeasure towards the great mass of his creatures—whose anger it is difficult to appease, and whose mercy but few of the children of men can obtain. How different the character of God as given by the pen of inspiration—how glorious, and beautiful, and consolatory the truth of the text, "For thou, Lord," &c. Our text directs us,

I. TO TWO OF THE LEADING PERFECTIONS OF DEITY.

II. To his gracious disposition towards the guilty. And,

III. To the characteristics of those who may freely be forgiven.

Our text leads us to notice,

I. Two of the leading perfections of Deity. "For thou, Lord, art good."

1. *The goodness of God.* By goodness we understand benevolence—a desire to diffuse happiness. Goodness is universally associated with kindness and beneficence, or liberality. God's goodness is the constant theme of divine revelation. He proclaimed this as a part of his blessed name, "abundant in goodness." This was the subject of the ancient songs of his people—"Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good." This goodness of God is great—the earth is said to be full of it—it endureth forever—it is said to follow the good man, and to satisfy all his desires. "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house," &c. The evidences of the divine goodness are all around us. How can we avoid them, or fail to see them? The glory of the divine goodness is seen in the outstretched heaven—the starry firmament. The beauty of the divine goodness is seen in all the rich and varied works of his hands—the beneficence of his goodness is seen in giving us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons—the extent of the divine goodness is manifest, in that it is over all his works. Our formation—our faculties—our wonderful bodies—our temporal blessings—the air we inhale—the food, the raiment, all our comforts, &c. The marvellous patience of the divine goodness extends to the unworthy and vile, to the just and the unjust, &c. Oh yes, what a striking truth it is, "Thou, Lord, art good," &c. Our text refers,

2. *To the mercy of God.* Mercy is kindness to the unworthy—goodness to the undeserving. God is good to the holy angels in heaven, but not merciful. To our first parents in Eden, but not till after the fall, was he merciful. Merciful and gracious is the character Deity claims. Now, the great evidences of the divine mercy are seen in the redemption of the world by Christ Jesus. He spared the guilty, and devised the means of their restoration to holiness and salvation. The sacrifice he gave for this, is the most stupendous exhibition of mercy the world ever saw. It astonished angels—it surpasseth knowledge—and in the continued overtures of love and kindness to the wicked this mercy is still displayed. Long-suffering and forbearance is not the whole; but expostulation, entreaty, continuance of means, &c. All the means of grace—all the kind providences—all the opportunities of repentance, are instances of the divine mercy. Of mercy God is said to be plenteous. In him it is an infinite fountain, a boundless ocean. As the light of the sun is plenteous—as the waters of the sea—as the air which surrounds the earth—so mercy is plenteous, infinite, exhaustless, and eternal. Notice,

II. His gracious disposition towards the guilty. He will not only forgive sinners, but he is ready, quite willing, not backward; he desires to do it—he delights to do it—he gave his Son, that, consistently with the claims of holiness and truth, sinners might be saved. He is ready to forgive the greatest of sinners—"Though your sins be as scarlet," &c. Though like the thick black cloud, &c.

1. *He is ready to forgive the most aggravated sinner.* Whose sins have been aggravated by many mercies, privileges, light, opportunities, &c. Jews, all sinners. Who shed his precious blood.

2. *He is ready to forgive the oldest sinners.* With all your infirmities—with all your train of years of ingratitude—with all your inability to do much for his cause and glory—at the eleventh hour, &c.

3. *He is ready to forgive all sinners.* No exception—no book of reprobation—no one will find himself excluded. Yet notice.

III. The characteristics of those who may be thus freely forgiven. "Unto all them who call upon him." This is just in accordance with his gracious declaration, "Whosoever shall call," &c. Application for mercy ensures it—ensures it to all. This calling is praying—asking for it—seeking it—knocking at the door. It must be the call of conscious need—a sense of our want of it—the plague of sin felt—the evil of sin deplored—spiritual healing desired.

1. *The call of earnest importunity.* The opposite of languor, indifference, or formality—as the drowning man calls for help—as the lost man calls for direction—as the starving man for food—as Jacob, "Lord, I

will not," &c.—as the Syrophenician woman, pressing and urging the suit.

2. *The call of faith in God's readiness.* A belief of the truth—the test of the truth of the gospel—a persuasion that God will honor his word, fulfil his promise.

3. *Calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.* Christ must be our plea—our foundation—to him we must refer, &c. Christ is the meritorious Mediator. Through him alone we can come to God, and for his sake be forgiven. In his name is preached remission of sins.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the great claims God has upon every one of us.* Upon our love, and gratitude, and obedience.

2. *How cheering the revelation of divine mercy.* Without it, despair would have settled upon our world forever.

3. *How gracious the way of salvation.* To call upon God for it.

4. *How desirable that each should experience, realize it.* And now we say to you, as the mariners said to Jonah, "Awake, thou sleeper, and call upon thy God."

THE NAME OF GOD THE CHRISTIAN'S SECURITY.

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."—PROV. xviii. 10.

OUR text is one of those very consolatory declarations in which the word of God abounds, and which all Christians so very much require. The Christian is weak, exposed to the malevolent attacks of fallen spirits, and ever liable to sorrow, disappointment, and trouble. The chief idea implied, and which is not expressed in the text, is the good man's peril. He is exposed to danger—a sheep among wolves—a vessel exposed to the raging storms of the mighty deep—a pilgrim, passing through an enemy's country. The apostle has expressed this state in two sentences, "Fightings without and fears within." What is he to do? The text gives a comforting reply. "The name of the Lord," &c.

I. THE NAME OF THE LORD.

II. ITS METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATION.

III. THE SAFETY IT AFFORDS.

These are the three topics of the text. Let us consider,

I. THE NAME OF THE LORD. God has many names. Jehovah is one of the greatest, and signifies To Be, and expresses the self-existence of the Deity. ELION signifies the Most High, God's supremacy over all beings and all worlds. AL-SHADI signifies All-sufficiency, usually translated Almighty, God all-sufficient. Jehovah Sabaoth, Lord of Hosts. ADONI signifies Lord or King, and refers to God's supreme authority and glory. But we shall consider the text as referring chiefly to God's comprehensive name, as revealing his nature, and perfections, and will, in his holy word, Exod. xxxiii. 18, see also xxxiv. 5. Now here is the revelation of God's name, as it most concerns sinful man; and is it not just adapted to his fallen condition and misery? But the Messiah is also called the name of God. Hear his voice and provoke him not, "For my name," &c. God's merciful name is only so through Christ Jesus. God's good, merciful, and gracious name, especially as revealed in the redemption of the world, is a strong tower, &c. Consider,

II. ITS METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATION. "A strong tower." Often described as a rock, high tower, fortress, refuge. A strong tower must have,

1. *A deep and massive foundation.* On this its security chiefly depends, especially in case of siege, &c. The house which stood upon the rock resisted the winds and the rain. The church is built upon a rock, therefore, &c. The immutability of Jehovah is the firm basis of this tower—he changes not, he repents not, he is ever and forever the same. A strong tower,

2. *Must have impregnable walls.* I need not say next to the basis these are of essential importance. The almighty power of God are the walls of defence. That arm which marshalled the stars, that gave birth, and form, and harmony, and stability to the universe, see Eph. iii. 20, &c.

3. *A strong tower must have the means of resisting an enemy.* Now these are the infinite resources of Jehovah. All the machinery of his providence—all the irresistible energies of his mind—all the creatures of his hands, he can convert into instruments of peril and death to his foes and the foes of his people. Hail, lightning, darkness, flies, pestilence, mildew, angelic interference, all can be employed to execute his will.

4. *Durability of material must be looked*

or in a strong tower. The hardest stone the rock could yield or the quarry present, was selected for this purpose, &c. Now, God is the enduring defence of his people. He abides through all ages—he is the everlasting God—inhabits eternity—he wearies not, fails not. Go back to the persecuted of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—to the early sufferings of the Christian church—to the martyrdom of prophets—to the early Jews—to the patriarchs. All his attributes endure forever. Observe,

III. The safety it affords. "The righteous runneth," &c. Safety is the grand end proposed. Observe,

1. *The inquirer after righteousness runneth into it, and is safe from the guilt of sin.* Convinced of sin, condemned by the law, conscience alarmed, he seeks safety. God in the gospel opens his heart to him, "Return unto me," &c. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die," &c. At length he obeys, and by faith makes God his habitation, his strong tower, obtains peace, and is saved. There is now no condemnation, he has hope and joy through believing.

2. *The tempted Christian runneth into it, and is safe from the assaults of the devil.* Who has subtlety, daring, or power sufficient to conflict with the fallen leader of the hosts of hell? In himself the Christian would necessarily be worsted, but he uses the weapon all-prayer, and by this runs into the high tower and is saved. We observe,

3. *The righteous in trouble run into this tower, and are kept or delivered.* The Christian is called to bear trouble, "they that will live godly," &c. It is through "much tribulation," &c. "Call upon me in the day," &c. And thus by prayer he runneth into this tower and he is delivered, and God glorified.

4. *The righteous in death runneth into it, and are saved from the power of the last enemy.* All human resources then fail. All refuges of lies, these are swept away. Society, scenes of pleasure, social circle, all, all fail. God is then the hope of the righteous. When flesh and heart fail, God is the strength of the heart, &c. Thus died Moses, thus David. Stephen amid the showers of stones. This is dying in the Lord—running into him, and committing the soul into his merciful hands.

APPLICATION.

1. *Is God your strong tower?* Can you say to God, thou art my God? This God is my God forever, &c.

2. *Are you righteous?* I mean evangelically so, by justifying grace, &c. Do you feel that you have chosen God for your portion, &c. How cheering is the text. You need a refuge, a defence. God is such for all seasons and circumstances. Rejoice, &c. "Happy art thou, O Israel," &c.

3. *Now choose the character and the portion of the righteous.* Now by penitence and faith return to him, &c.

CREATION.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."—Gen. i. 1.

It does not follow from these words that the original matter of which our world was composed, was brought out of nothing at the period to which the Mosaic account of the creation refers. It has been conjectured by our first critics, that this verse states a truth antecedent to the events which follow in the chapter. It is clear too that the account of the creation must be confined to our earth, and that it was not designed to relate to the solar system, or starry worlds, (see Bush's admirable notes on Genesis, where the apparent difficulties are learnedly and satisfactorily removed.) Our present design is to refer to a few thoughts which the contemplation of the creation of our world is calculated to produce. Observe,

I. The sublime description the scriptures present. The supreme Being is introduced in all his self-existing and independent majesty and glory. He steps forth to give palpable form to the purposes of his infinitely wise and benevolent mind. He proclaims his authoritative mandate, and the elements of nature obey him. He says. "let it be," and "it is." He commands. and it stands fast. His voice possesses omnific energy. His volitions are fraught with almighty power. He says, "let there be light," and light instantly shines forth, the fairest, unconscious image of its creator. He says, let there be a firmament, &c., and it was so. Let there be earth and sea. Let there be herbs and grass. Let there be lights in the firmament, or let them now shine. Let there be animated creatures in the air, on the earth, and in

the sea. And then with extraordinary marks of dignified attention it is written, "So God created man in his own image," &c.

II. The order and arrangement which were displayed. Light was first formed to give visibility to the works of the divine hands. Then the different elements were separated. Light and darkness,—the waters above and those beneath,—the earth and the sea. The various orders of creatures were destined to their appropriate spheres of existence and action. And these various elements were prepared with sustenance before the creatures were formed. Then the power of reproduction was given both to the vegetable and animal kingdoms. When the palace was finished and the domain of earthly magnificence completed, then man the Lord of the whole was introduced into the Eden of the new and fair creation.

III. The wisdom and power of God which were manifest. The endless variety of indescribable beauty were evidences of God's wisdom and knowledge. The ease with which all was effected by the divine power. A word from the Omnipotent One was enough. "The works of the Lord are great, and sought out of all them who have pleasure therein." "O Lord, how manifold are thy works," &c. How striking these ideas are rendered when it is remembered that all nature is formed of only two or three original elements!

IV. Observe the perfections of the creation. When contemplated as a whole, or examined with diligence and minuteness in its parts, how complete, how harmonious, how fully impressed with the skill of its great Artificer! Nothing redundant, —nothing deficient,— nothing out of place. When infinite wisdom had surveyed the whole, it was pronounced very good. Answering all the intentions of its Maker, and adapted to all the purposes of its formation.

V. Observe the goodness evidenced in creation. In the formation of all living creatures for enjoyment. In their circumstances being adapted to their variety of nature. In the provisions creation furnishes for their constant exigencies. But especially in the profusion of generous provision made for the happiness of man. The wonders of creation burst upon his vision in all its agreeable variety. The sounds of nature, from the gentle breeze to the roaring cataract, fall upon his ear. Its herbs, and plants, and flowers regale him with their fragrant and diversified perfumes. A thousand kinds of fruits, in endless and rich variety, gratify his taste, while his frame is rendered delicately adapted to the influences and sympathies of feeling. And in all these, there is much to engage the mind, to furnish matter for contemplation, and grateful emotion and joy. The whole earth is full of the goodness of God. Its cheering light, its refreshing streams, its balmy air, its necessary and nightly darkness, all display the benevolence of the Creator.

APPLICATION.

1. The works of creation form a legitimate and interesting subject of pious contemplation, Psalm viii. 3, 4.

2. We should duly estimate the dignified scale we held among the creatures of God. Mid link and uniting chain between the angels and the inferior creatures.

3. Let creation lead our minds to the great Creator. To God—the Son of God, by whom all things were made, &c.

ANGELS.

"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels."—Psalm lxviii. 17.

It does not appear that angels are included in the Mosaic account of the creation, for they were present on that occasion as adoring spectators. For then, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. The scriptures do not furnish us with an extended regular history of these blessed intelligences; but a sufficiency of incidental reference is given to enable us to form a correct estimation of their holy and intellectual character, and the important position they occupy in the moral portion of God's universe. The name itself is indicative rather of their office than their nature, signifying messenger, or one sent. It is obvious from the scripture revelation,

I. That the angels are spiritual intelligences. "Who maketh his angels spirits." It is not our present province to define what is meant by spirit. But, believing in the spirituality of the divine essence, and in the spiritual immateriality of

he soul, we are not perplexed in conceiving of created beings, who are not formed of material substance, or clothed with corporeal bodies.

II. ANGELS ARE IMMORTAL, OR UNDYING INTELLIGENCES. This is clearly intimated in that passage, "Neither can they die any more, for they are equal to the angels," Luke xx. 36. This involves the idea, that by the very constitution of their nature they are immortal, and not liable to decay or dissolution.

III. ANGELS ARE HOLY INTELLIGENCES. "Sons of God." Often described as the holy angels. Of necessity, such in their creation. The offspring of a holy Deity. Their obedience to the divine will is referred to by the psalmist, who speaks of them as "his ministers, who do his pleasure." And the holy service of the angels is referred to by the Saviour, who has taught us, that the will of God should be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven. Their love of holiness is evident from their intense celebration of the divine purity. They rest not day nor night, but ever wait to know the divine pleasure; and, covering their faces with their wings, cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts," &c. Isa. vi. 3. It is also clear, that the holy angels resisted the temptations of the leader of those who kept not their first estate, but by reason of their rebellion were cast down from their high habitations, &c.

IV. ANGELS ARE BENEVOLENT INTELLIGENCES. It is clear that they delight in the benevolent works of God, especially in the great scheme of redemption. Benevolence is one of the essential attributes of holiness; for they cannot love and delight in God without also loving his creatures, especially those who resemble him in purity. How they exulted in the advent of the Saviour—"Glory to God in the highest," &c. How gladly they revealed his resurrection; how deeply they study the mysteries of the cross, 1 Pet. i. 12.

V. THEY ARE ACTIVE AND POWERFUL INTELLIGENCES. Hence they fly to do God's bidding. See an extraordinary instance in the history of Daniel, ix. 20. See also Matt. xiii. 21. They also "excel in strength," and are called the "mighty angels." Hence some of their stupendous doings are related in the scriptures, when employed as the agents of God, and the instruments of his providence.

VI. ANGELS ARE INTELLIGENCES HIGHLY ENDOWED WITH KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM. Their purely spiritual nature, their high rank, their exalted place of abode, their opportunities of observation, must all lead to their intellectual greatness. Doubtless they possess clearness of understanding, perfect soundness of judgment, and an expanded vigor of comprehension, belonging only to themselves.

VII. ANGELS ARE DISTINGUISHED INTO VARIOUS CLASSES, RANKS, AND ORDERS. Hence their diversity of appellations, as seraphim and cherubim, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, and in number they are thousands of thousands.

VIII. ANGELS ARE THE SERVANTS OF GOD TO EXECUTE HIS PLEASURE.

1. *In ministering to the children of God.* Hence they *counselled* and instructed—Hagar, Gen. xvi. 7; Abraham, Gen. xviii. 2; Joshua, Gideon, Elijah, 2 Kings iii. 10–16; David, Daniel, Zacharias, Luke i. 11; Joseph, Matt. i. 20; Philip, Acts viii. 16; Peter, Acts x. 3. They *comforted*—Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 1; Daniel, x. 19; Paul, Acts xxvii. 24. They delivered—Lot from Sodom; Daniel from the lion's den; and Peter and the apostles from prison. They were the *attendants* of the Saviour at his birth—baptism—temptation—transfiguration—agony—death—resurrection—and ascension into heaven. They *rejoice* in the conversion of sinners, and bear the souls of the saints to the mansions of glory. They are *destined* also to attend Christ at his second coming, and witness the judgment of the world at the great day.

2. *In being the instruments of the divine vengeance.* As in the instances of the destruction of the Assyrian army, and in the death of the persecuting Herod, Acts xii.

APPLICATION.

1. The pious have the distinguished privilege of angelic ministration, Heb. i. 14.
2. They are worthy of our study and imitation.
3. They will be the companions of the redeemed in glory forever.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

"And man became a living soul."—GEN. ii. 7.

MAN is not only distinguished above the inferior creatures by the possession of rea-

son, but by the essential constitution of his nature. The difference, both in the mode and description of man's creation, over the animal creatures, is peculiarly striking and instructive—see Gen. i. 22–25, compared with ver. 26, 27. Now, this distinction consists in man having a compound nature, a material body, and an incorporeal mind; in other words, that man is distinguished as having a living soul. Let us attempt some account of the soul, and then endeavor to establish its immortality. We offer,

I. Some remarks on the soul. The soul, or spiritual part of man, is characterized by its consciousness, its volitions, its desires, &c. There is,

1. *The understanding.* By which the soul perceives, observes, and attains knowledge. The eye of the mind.

2. *The judgment.* By which the soul determines as to the quality, &c. of the objects presented to the understanding. This power is either exercised in determining the abstract properties of things, or in comparing one thing with another, and then drawing its deductions.

3. *The imagination.* By which objects are contemplated through an ideal medium. That power which gives a pictured representation to the thoughts, &c. of the mind.

4. *The affections, or emotions.* Of love—and desire—and hope. Of anger, and fear, &c.

5. *The conscience, or the moral sense.* By which we decide as to the moral right or wrong of actions. Whose conclusions, however, are only infallible when under the influence of divine light and truth.

6. *The will, or self-determination.* By which man decides, and chooses, and acts, as he may be influenced by the motives presented to him. Now, these faculties of the soul, though enfeebled, &c. by sin, yet are essential to the soul, and exercise their power, except in cases of infancy, idiocy, and insanity. Let us, then,

II. Endeavor to establish its immortality. That is, its undying existence, its everlasting being. We refer,

1. *To its essential nature.* Immaterial, or spiritual. In this it seems to partake of a nature like unto that of the angels; yea, in some sense to resemble the spirituality of the Deity. Metaphysicians have reasoned plausibly from this in favor of the immortality of the soul. We refer,

2. *To the excellency of its attributes.* The powers we have referred to, seem too high and celestial for the limited range of earth and time. The amazing powers of the soul for sublime spiritual contemplation, and its unwearied activity, seem greatly to strengthen the idea of its immortality.

3. *From its capacity for improvement and enjoyment.* There is no boundary to the growth and enlargement of the mind. Think of Newton, and Locke, and Shakspeare, in their infancy and in their mature years. Mental stores may be amassed almost beyond limitation. The exercise of these expanded powers often sets at defiance years, and disease itself, though generally impaired by the infirmities of the body as their medium of contact with external things. So the capacity for enjoyment is equally boundless. Its desires are ever soaring higher and higher; its delights are ever capable of a greater exquisiteness of bliss.

4. *From the innate desires and general impressions of immortality.* Man seems to abhor and shudder at the idea of extinction. He is emphatically the creature of the future. His wishes and hopes never reach a climax; beyond, beyond, is the watchword of the soul. He is ever longing for that he has not. Even in the enjoyment of God, he seeks for a nearer communion, a clearer knowledge, a fuller enjoyment, than earth can ever yield. Besides, the impressions of immortality seem to have been common to mankind in all ages and countries; few nations in which some idea, however feeble or confused, has not existed of a future state of being.

5. *From the apparent want of wise design if man is not immortal.* Wherefore his lofty powers: wherefore his desires, his progression in truth and purity: wherefore his internal horror at annihilation, which would appear as an anomaly in creation, if he be not destined to exist in another world?

6. *From the essential principles of justice and equity.* God is just and holy in all his ways. He must hate, loathe, and punish sin; he must delight in and reward holiness. But view mankind merely in the mirror of this life, and you behold vice triumphant, prosperous, gay, arrayed in wealth and power, and faring sumptuously every day. You behold Christian virtue poor, scorned, persecuted, dying by the hands of the violent and wicked. Does

God see? is he holy? then both characters must be transferred to other spheres, where God will deal with every man according to his character and works.

7. *This subject is demonstrated in the pages of revelation.* Here life and immortality are brought to light; here all men are represented as candidates for an eternity of bliss, or woes everlasting. The translations of Enoch and Elijah, as illustrated by the Redeemer, Matt. xxii. 31, 32; Psalm xvi. 10, 11; John v. 28; 2 Cor. v. 1–8; parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

APPLICATION.

1. *How great the dignity of man!* Even in his ruins, how majestic he appears when contemplated in the immortality of his being!

2. *How great our responsibility!* Living and acting for an eternal state of existence. Travelling towards the boundless regions of immortality.

3. *How joyous the gospel proclamation!* A message of present and eternal life. Tidings of immortal life and glory.

4. *How essential personal religion!*

THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

"And at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever; whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation," &c.—DANIEL iv 34, 35.

OUR text is the language of Nebuchadnezzar after his restoration to soundness of mind. His affliction was happily sanctified to the good of his soul, and he learned to venerate the true and blessed God, and to give homage and praise to his glorious and exalted name. Both the words and sentiments of the text are striking, powerful, and instructive, and convey a truly sublime view of Deity to our minds. But we desire especially to regard them as presenting a lucid and comprehensive representation of the divine government. Our subject directs us,

I. TO THE SUPREMACY OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. God the Most High exercises his unconstrained authority over the universe. His throne is exalted in the highest heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. He is the God of all the kingdoms of the earth. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion from generation to generation. Men may possess authority and power, sway sceptres over vast empires. Angels may have power delegated to them. But all right and power is in the hand of the God of heaven and earth. As the creator of all and the sustainer of all,—intimately acquainted with all,—present everywhere by his ubiquity,—having unwearying strength,—an infinity of resources—who so fit for the supremacy of the universe? How below all righteous contempt do idols appear when contrasted with the God of heaven and earth! Notice,

II. THE ETERNITY OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. "Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion." How appropriate with the title given to Jehovah in the text, "That liveth for ever and ever." As such he existed before all things. His wisdom and might brought all things into being. With him is no mutability, so that he has ever stood in the same relationship to his works. Of his years there will be no end, so that he will reign forever and ever.

III. THE IRRESISTIBLE CHARACTER OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. "He doeth according to his will, &c. and none can stay his stand." His will is ever in harmony with justice, holiness, and benevolence. His will is his law, his indisputable law. His will cannot be effectually resisted. Angels may dispute it, and man may rebel against it, but in both cases inevitable discomfiture must be the result. How arrogant for created intelligences to arraign it,—for created power to oppose it! Stubbornness, determination, or combination, can only lead to the ruin of those who exhibit them. The breath of his nostrils would consume them together. Notice,

IV. THE INFINITE EXTENT OF HIS GOVERNMENT. He executes his will in the "army of heaven." The host of angelic intelligences all obey him. His commandments in heaven are received with joy, and obeyed with alacrity and delight. His government extends to the whole earth, with all its inhabitants. None are without, or beyond the pale of his control. Every human being of every nation, color, people, and tongue. All classes and conditions are subject to him. He restrains the wrath

of the wicked, and overruleth all the purposes and plots of the ungodly so as to secure the counsels of his will. Besides, the divine dominion is exercised over the material parts and elements of the universe. His government extends over all the inferior creatures. Everywhere he is present, and everywhere his power is exercised and his authority indisputably displayed.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. The divine government is worthy of highest wonder and adoration. How vast,—how high,—how perpetual,—how infinite,—how incomprehensible the idea of one universal pervading Spirit,—observing all, diffused through, and governing all!

2. It is a subject worthy of our frequent contemplation. Much of God is seen in his works, and much in his boundless dominion. Here we may meditate until our minds are filled with the loftiest feelings of awe and admiration.

3. It is a subject which should lead to fervent thanksgiving. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." How cheering that the world is not left to the contingencies of chance. Not left to the powerful control of some evil despot. Not left to the unrestrained reign and rage of the god of this world. That wicked men have not the sole reins of government. The great disposer of all events,—the great governor of heaven, and earth, and hell, is Jehovah, the righteous, ever-blessed God.

4. It shows us the importance of religion. For what is religion, but our acquiescence in the will of God? Our conformity to his revealed will? This must tend to our dignity, security, and blessedness.

5. The folly of rebelling against his authority. Let the doom of fallen angels,—the expulsion of our first parents,—the judgments with which he has visited our world; warn the incorrigible of the certainty of final and endless ruin. "Kiss the Son," &c.

6. The certainty of God's universal dominion over our world. By the power of his truth, by the might of his Spirit, he has destined our world to become the kingdom of Christ, and that he shall reign over all, and forever and ever.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

"The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."—PROV. xvi. 33.

IN this very expressive proverb we are taught the universal government and superintendence of God. God manages all the affairs of heaven, earth, and hell. His reign is universal. His authority boundless. The universe in all its grandeur, and in all the minuteness of its various parts, is under his exact arrangement. With God there is no chance, nothing accidental. His providence includes the rightful regulation of *every* thing. It even descendeth to lots,—a doubtful matter has to be settled, the counsel of those concerned is insufficient, and the lot is cast into the lap, the finger of God disposeth of it. A case is presented, Acts i. 23, &c. You have all been interested in the case of Jonah, see Jonah i. 7.

Our subject is the providence of God. Consider,

I. THE PREREQUISITES OF PROVIDENCE. It presupposes that the world is under control, &c.; under the control of one great presiding First Cause. Now this great, blessed, glorious, and eternal being, is God. And as the moral governor of the universe, he is possessed of every attribute and perfection, as the supreme Jehovah.

1. *Infinite knowledge and wisdom.* He knows every thing. All his works. All things. All intelligent beings. Nothing hidden; nothing obscure. At one glance he surveys all things, from eternity to eternity. As such, all he does is done wisely, infallibly, no improvement possible, &c.

2. *Universal presence.* His influential presence is everywhere. "Heaven of heavens," &c. "Whither shall I flee," &c. He fills heaven and earth. This is the perfection of the sublime. Who can grasp the immense idea, God guiding the path of the seraph in heaven, and superintending the fall of the sparrow on earth?

3. *Illimitable power.* "I know thou canst do every thing;" that is, every thing fit and morally right. He asks, "Is there any thing too hard," &c. "The thunder of his power who," &c.

II. THE NATURE OF PROVIDENCE.

1. *It includes the government, or rule of all things.* He has given to every department of the universe suitable laws. The air is governed by atmospheric laws. Wa-

ter by laws suited to it. Light. So every thing else. These are all God's laws. He originated them all, and he sits at the helm of all affairs, directing all things by the word of his power. The connection of all is pointed out by the prophet, Hosea ii. 21, 22.

2. *It includes the preservation of all things.* To rule is one thing, but to supply the wants of all is another. In providence God does both. Fountain of supply to the universe. Every thing lives by him and through him. Source of life, of being, and enjoyment. Not one creature is independent.

3. *It includes the direction of all things to one grand consummation.* Opposed to God's rule are all fallen angels and wicked men. In providence, therefore, God overrules their evil designs and rebellious acts, and makes even the wrath of man to praise him; and he will, finally, by the conversion or the imprisonment of the ungodly, annihilate all moral evil, and fill this world with holiness and bliss, so that all men shall be blessed in Christ, and call him blessed. This leads us to notice more fully,

III. The extent of Providence. Now the providence of God includes all things, and all acts.

1. *It extends to celestial beings.* Their ranks, offices, stations, and services, Psalm ciii. 20.

2. *It extends to all mere animal creatures.* Now the providence of God is seen both in supplying them with food, and in the diversity of instinct by which they are distinguished. Who taught the bird to construct its nest, and every bird to construct such a one as is best suited for its kind, and all different? To migrate at the proper period from one country to another, and to do it so correctly without chart, or the aid of a compass, to know the right path! Who taught the fish to retrace its course, and find out annually its native rivers and streams? The beaver to erect so scientifically its house? The bee, so wonderfully its cell? and the ant, so systematically its city? How wonderfully they are all supplied with suitable food, which they instinctively seek and find! Look, too, at the distribution of the creatures; those which are most useful and essential to the comfort of man, abound in the densely populated parts of the world, while the deadly and dangerous animals are principally found in solitary parts, far from the dwellings of mankind. The man who is not more stupid than the ox, or more inconsiderate than the ass, must see in all this the wonderful providence of God. We have now,

3. *To consider it especially as it regards the human race.* And that as it respects,

(1.) Our entrance into life, Psalm lxxi. 6, xxii. 9.

(2.) Our circumstances and condition in life, Deut. xxx. 9, xxxii. 9.

(3.) Our removal from this life, Job xiv. 5; Psalm xxxix. 4; 1 Samuel xxvi. 10; Eccles. iii. 1, &c.

IV. The Providence of God has often been singularly displayed in the punishment of the wicked. Look at Pharaoh, who had multiplied the grievous burdens of the people of Israel; see the number of his plagues. His most cruel edict—the death of the males. See the river of blood, and the death of the first-born. Behold the finger of God. His final overthrow. Look at Adonibezek; he had been successful as a warrior, but had practised the greatest cruelty. "Three score and ten kings," &c. See the case of Ahab, 1 Kings xxii. 34. Look at Haman, with the bitterest hate he plots the ruin of the Jews; he succeeds in every step, the decree is passed and is irreversible. But God disturbs the Persian monarch—turns the plot upon Haman, and *he* is suspended from the gallows he had erected for Mordecai. Behold Belshazzar; the sacred vessels of the Lord's house had been carried as spoil to Babylon; he appoints a night of revelling and dissipation; the vessels are used in their rioting. In the same hour the invisible messenger records the doom of the monarch and the ruin of his kingdom. Look at Herod,—arrayed in costly vestments, he addresses the people, and receives the honors only due to the true God, and is smitten with the finger of the Lord.

V. The Providence of God is seen in striking interpositions on behalf of his people.

1. *Read the history of Joseph.* See what links in the providential chain! Hated. Sent forth. The dry pit. Sold. See him in Egypt,—in Potiphar's house. In prison. As ruler over all the land. Well might he say, "Now therefore be not angry with yourselves that ye sold me, &c., for God did send me before you to preserve life."

2. *Reflect on the preservation of Moses.* The decree, the birth, the resolution, the method, the rescue, the weeping, the sympathy, the nurse, the education, &c.

3. *Observe one point in the history of Gideon.* Israelites oppressed. Gideon called to deliver. The enemy fearfully numerous. His heart fails, he approaches the camp. Hears a dream related, and is at once inspirited for the conflict, Judges vii. 13.

4. *Look at the basis of David's prosperity and renown,* 1 Samuel xvii. 26. His three eldest brethren are in the army. David is sent with provisions, &c. At this time Goliath is giving the impious challenge. David accepts it, and slays the giant. One or two *historical events.*

In the days of Queen Mary, a person was sent with an edict for destroying the protestants of Ireland. At Chester, while lodging at the mayor's house, he happened to state the nature of his commission. A woman who overheard this, extracted this cruel edict from his possession. On his arrival therefore before the authorities, his commission was missed. He returned and obtained a second, but on his way to Ireland again the queen died. And thus the protestants of Ireland were preserved.

Tyndal's Bible sold very heavily, and was likely to ruin those who had embarked in it, when the Bishop of London, to stay the progress of truth, bought immense quantities up and burnt them: thus Tyndal was relieved, and a second and larger edition was printed and circulated. Let us ask in conclusion,

WHAT USE WE SHOULD MAKE OF THE DIRECTIONS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

1. *We should learn the importance of having God for our friend.* To be on terms of reconciliation with God. To be conscious of his favor. That he who rides on the wings of the wind, and that directs the storm and the tempest, is a being who loves us. The way to God's favor is through Jesus Christ. All Christ's disciples know that they are loved of God. The Spirit of God bearing witness, &c.

2. *We see the great necessity for constant prayer.* "In all things by prayer," &c. For he ordereth all things. He has all resources in himself. The hearts of all men are in his hands. In all circumstances let us pray, &c.

3. *The great ground for confidence and trust.* All must be right when God controls all, and reigns over all. "Trust in the Lord Jehovah forever," &c. The doctrine of a divine Providence is full of consolation, &c.

4. *Let it not be abused by our presumption or ignorance.* God governs the world by two kinds of laws. The material world by physical laws; the intelligent part of creation by moral laws. Now if a bad man obeys the physical laws, he will enjoy the physical benefits. Let exercise and temperance prove it. If a good man violates them he will suffer.

5. *Let us not wonder at the apparent darkness of the divine dispensations.* It must be so to all but God.

MAN.

FIRST SKETCH.

"What is man that thou art mindful of him?"—PSALM viii. 4.

IT seems evident that this psalm was composed during the night season. That the divine psalmist was contemplating the heavens, beholding with sublime interest the starry host, and witnessing the moon speeding her course with her reflected glory and silvery brightness. No science more calculated to inspire with profound awe, or lofty emotions, than that of astronomy. The vastness of heaven's outspread canopy—the splendor and magnitude of the starry worlds—the comprehensive and yet minute laws by which their attraction and course are directed, all these, with many other questions, are adapted to fill us with wonder and astonishment. Is it not next to impossible to consider these things and not to ascend still higher, and raise our minds to the great Creator and upholder of them all? Read David's pious exultation when considering the same theme, Psalm xix. 1–6. From the heavens the psalmist descends to the creature man, and asks, "What is man," &c. Our text contains an important question, and includes a twofold interesting declaration. In our text we have,

I. AN IMPORTANT QUESTION, AND WHAT IT INVOLVES. The question relates to man, and might include a variety of interesting particulars. We ask,

1. *What is man as to his nature?* (1.) We reply, he is a compound being, mate

ria. as to his bodily structure. Formed originally of the dust of the ground, yet this body is fearfully and wonderfully made. The perfection of animal nature, combining all that is valuable and beautiful in itself. Its erect form, its exalted head, its countenance divine, displaying in all its parts both the wisdom and goodness of God. We cannot enlarge on the anatomical and physiological wonders of the human frame; for were we to do so, any one part, the eye, the ear, the hand, the heart, might supply us with ample matter for a sermon. Let us just name, however, a few particulars. In the human body there are 245 bones, with forty distinct intentions, 446 muscles within; so that the bones and muscles have upwards of 14,000 intentions. Then there are not fewer than 10,000 nerves, with an equal number of veins and arteries. 1,000 ligaments, 4,000 lacteals and lymphatics, 100,000 glands, and the skin contains not fewer than 200 millions of pores, all of which are so many avenues of health or sickness, life or death. Look at this complex, marvellous machine, and see in it the wondrous work of God. The functions of the heart are truly amazing. The heart contracts 4,000 times every hour, and during that period there passes through it 250 pounds of blood; so that the whole of the fluid of life, averaging twenty-five pounds, passes through the whole system of veins, arteries, &c., fourteen times every hour, or about every four minutes. That which distinguishes the human body from the mere animal creation most, is the capaciousness of the brain, and the wonders of the human hand. By this peculiar member of the body, man possesses the advantages of every other creature. With this he digs and explores the bowels of the earth, rises higher than the eagle ever soars, can traverse the whole region of the earth, and float on the waters, and thus circumnavigate the globe. By this he can raise ponderous loads which would crush the elephant, and form instruments of defence against the attacks of all the ferocious beasts of prey. We reply,

(2.) Man is a rational, intellectual being. We do not attempt to draw the line where instinct or reason in the inferior creatures ends, and the superior reason of man commences. There is this difference. Each class of the animal creation have their peculiar instincts, &c.; but the reason of man avails him for every contingency, and goes beyond the instincts of the whole animal creation. It has been said, too, that the inferior creation just act as the whole of their respective species have done for generations, no improvement or advancement; while the mind and reason of man are ever progressing, and no limits can be set to the sphere of their operations. Look at the amazing efforts of mind in two or three particulars. By the invention of the telescope he brings worlds before his view, which are millions of miles distant from him. By the invention of the microscope he magnifies and renders capable of his observation creatures the most minute, the existence of which would otherwise never have been known. By the discovery of the mariner's compass, he guides his way across perilous oceans, to the most distant parts of the habitable earth. By exerting his influence over the air, and over fire and water, he makes the elements of nature do his bidding, and minister to his claims. By the invention of printing he gives a kind of ubiquity to his thoughts, and stereotypes his wishes to all generations.

(3.) We reply, man is a moral being; he is rendered accountable to the great Supreme for all his actions, words, and thoughts. He can know his duty, reflect, judge, compare, and freely act; and it is evident that the present is only a probationary state of existence. Such is the nature of man, and furnishes a reply to the first question we proposed respecting him. We ask,

2. *What is man as a responsible being?* Responsibility implies the existence of law, revelation, and ability.

(1.) Man is under law or government. There are laws in our nature, as there is instinct in the brute creation. The law of natural affection to parents, children, friends, &c. Besides, there is the law of conscience, or the impressions of the mind as to what is right or wrong; but this will only act truly and without error, under the influence of light and truth. Neither of these are sufficient. God has, therefore, given man specific laws to regulate all his actions towards himself, mankind, and God.

(2.) This law God has revealed—it is contained in the volume of eternal life, the Holy Scriptures. Here it is spread fully

before our eyes. Now this revelation is full, clear, and sufficient.

(3.) There must be ability; ability to understand, and ability to perform. Man must be free to choose or to refuse, or there can be neither virtue nor vice. He is always thus addressed in God's word: "If ye be willing and obedient," &c. "Behold, I set before you life and death," &c.

3. *Man is an immortal being.* This is out the morning of his existence. Indeed, unless he is immortal, there is no such thing as responsibility. Here vice is not generally punished, nor goodness generally rewarded, so that the claims of righteousness and equity demand that man should exist in another world. Many of the ancient pagan philosophers came to this conclusion, and it is fully revealed in the gospel, where life and immortality are brought to light. This is man's seed-time, the period of his minority, the time of his servitude, and he is destined to an eternity of existence in another world. This stamps man's character with immense importance, with unutterable value. But we draw to a conclusion.

LEARN,

1. How necessary that we should know ourselves, and reflect on the great end of our being. What am I? What the claims of God? What my destiny?

2. How important that we should be found doing the will of God. This is the will of God, to believe in Christ, and to obey his commandments.

3. How momentous tha we should live for the eternity before us live accepted of God through Christ Jesus; live in communion with God; live in the exercise of faith and hope.

MAN.

SECOND SKETCH.

"What is man that thou art mindful of him?"—PSALM viii. 4.

IN a previous discourse we considered this question in a physical, intellectual, and moral respect. We directed you to some of the wonders displayed in his body—his moral condition, and the immortality of his being. Thus man stands midway between he inferior animal creation and the holy angels; the connecting link; lord of earth, and heir of heaven; more dignified than the beasts of the field, and but a little lower than the angels. But, in contemplating man as a moral being,

II. WE OFFER SEVERAL ADDITIONAL REPLIES TO THE QUESTION PROPOSED. "What is man?"

1. *That he is not what he once was.* His present state is one of deterioration. He is fallen—not now as when he sprang from the hands of the great Artificer. God made man upright, &c. He created him in his own image, &c. He is not what he was once,

(1.) As to the health and immortality of his body. He was formed for endless duration of being. If God intended to remove him from the earth after a season of probation, it would have been without tasting death. Entire, body and soul, as Enoch or Elijah. Beautiful, vigorous, hale, undying. How altered! poor, weak, fragile, diseased, and exposed to ten thousand attacks of fatal affliction. Life is entered with cries and sorrow. We live in an atmosphere of mortality, and our cradles truly rock us to the tomb. Thus was the human frame wrecked on the sunken shoals of sin and transgression.

(2.) He is not what he once was in his dominions and possessions. See Gen. i. 27, 28. Sin has hurled man from his throne of dominion and rule—exiled him from his domain—banished him from his kingdom. The crown has fallen, the sceptre is departed, and the ferocious beasts of the forest are arrayed in fierce daring against him. They no longer own his control, nor give him tribute. His lovely dwelling-place has been confiscated by his treason, and he is doomed by the sweat of his brow to compel the barren earth to yield him support.

(3.) He is not what he once was in his moral powers. Oh, how awful the contrast! Then arrayed in the garments of purity—harmony within and beauty without. His understanding reflecting divine knowledge—his judgment influenced only by truth—his will cheerfully obedient to God's authority—his conscience serene and happy—his affections spiritual and heavenly; in one sentence, perfectly happy, because entirely holy. Now his understanding darkened—judgment perverse—will rebellious—conscience defiled—affections

earthly—and over the whole the evil genius of sin, and confusion, and misery presiding.

(4.) He is not what he once was, in his condition and associations. Then an object of divine love, favor, and fellowship—then often visited by angels—then a monarch. Now under wrath—in league with fallen spirits—a rebel doomed to die, &c.—speeding his way to the grave, and to the abyss of despair. In reply to the question of the text, we remark,

2. *Man is not naturally what he may be.* His fall is not irreparable—his loss not final—his case not hopeless. He cannot regain all he has lost. Not a sound physical system—not dominion over the inferior creatures—not an earthly Eden—not translation to a heavenly world; but he can regain more than a counterbalance to all the ills and woes sin has introduced, through the love of God, in our redemption by Christ Jesus.

(1.) His guilt may be cancelled. Forgiveness is obtained, and published, and offered.

(2.) His nature may be renewed, his heart changed, cleansed, sanctified, by the Spirit and grace of God.

(3.) His soul may be the seat of joy and blissful hope—kingdom of God within—begotten again to a lively hope, &c.—become an expectant of life eternal. Salvation is within his reach; and this includes being an "heir of God, and joint-heir with Jesus Christ."

3. *Man is not what he shall hereafter be.* Now a probationer, in a future state of existence his state will be irrevocable, fixed, and eternal. Whatsoever a man now sows, that shall he reap. Two states are revealed. Man changed and consecrated to God in heart and life until death. Then he will be hereafter exalted to God's kingdom and glory; a companion of angels; a worshipper of the Lamb; a sainted, beatified spirit forever. Not a wrestler, but victor; not a racer, but crowned with the imperishable wreath; not a minor, but an inheritor of the blessedness, &c. How elevated, changed, &c. All his desires met—all his faith realized—all his hopes in fruition—body and soul glorified forever, &c. Man *unchanged* and *impenitent*, how different his state hereafter will be! No admixture of enjoyment, or rest, or hope; no possibility of salvation. Judged, condemned, punished, and that with everlasting banishment from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power. We ask, then,

4. *What is man as to his responsibilities?* We have already admitted his responsibility. We now add,

(1.) That he is responsible for his faculties and endowments. He must give an account for his rational powers and mental endowments; for their right employment; for their due improvement; to be directed in reference to God and eternity.

(2.) For his privileges and mercies. These are of various kinds. A preached gospel—the favorable openings of providence—continued bestowment of God's bounties, &c. Among these we may also mention, time, with the means of grace, &c.

(3.) For his influence and talents. Not merely to get good and receive benefits to his own soul, but also to bless those in the various spheres where providence has placed him. To do good in the world; to show forth the virtues and graces of the Christian character, &c. Now, this responsibility arises from the fact, that this is his probation, and he is hastening to the eternity of righteous retribution.

APPLICATION.

1. What is your individual state before God? What your hopes and fears? What your true condition before Deity? Is it better or worse than the past? Is it improving, or debasing? Is it rising in conformity to God?

2. Learn the necessity of self-reflection and meditation. What am I? From whence? Where destined? Know yourselves, &c.

3. Next to self-knowledge, and in connection with it, the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. "This is life eternal," &c.

PARADISE.

"And the Lord formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. And the Lord planted a garden eastward in Eden," &c.—GEN. ii. 7–9.

OUR text goes backward to the creation of the world. It is a part of the Mosaic account of God's wonder-working arm, in giving being to our world, and the creatures

which inhabit it. We observe here, that all other accounts of the creation are absurd, many of them monstrous in the extreme. The pagan philosophers knew nothing about it; but each speculated according to his own mind, and the whole of them left the subject unsettled. A divine revelation could alone make this subject known, and the one contained in the scriptures is in perfect accordance with the earth itself, is such as to exhibit the glory of the great Artificer, and commend itself to the intelligence of the human mind. Every step in the majestic work is worthy of contemplation; but our text must limit us to man's paradisaical condition. Observe,

I. THE PERSON INTRODUCED TO US IN THE TEXT.

II. THE PLACE PREPARED FOR HIS RECEPTION. And,

III. THE ENJOYMENTS ARISING FROM ITS OCCUPATION.

I. THE PERSON INTRODUCED TO US IN THE TEXT. This person is man, the last work of God, and the master-piece of the whole. The divine Artificer was God; yet not the Father but the Son, for he created all things by Jesus Christ—"All things were made by him," &c. Man is presented to us in his compound character.

1. *In his material animal body.* This was formed of the dust of the earth—from the name given to the first man, Adam, which signifies red earth. Yet, even in the creation of his body, there is a dignity of expression which is not used in reference to the mere animal creation. Compare ver. 25 of chap. i. and the text. The body is a wonderful exhibition of divine skill. Some think the idea is that of a potter, who forms upon his wheel the vessel of peculiar elegance and worth. How many subjects press upon our attention in reference to the formation of the body of man! Our origin is the dust. However proud or careful we may be of them, they are but modified dust. They are tabernacles reared for a time on the earth, and they are tending to the dust. "Our fathers, where are they?" Alas! now mingling with their native earth. Let not this subject be forgotten. But man is presented to us,

2. *In the spirituality and dignity of his soul.* This interesting casket was but to be the case of a precious jewel; the house of a celestial inhabitant. The words may originally include the life of the body as well as of the soul, for the Hebrew is, *breath of lives;* natural life, but especially denoting the existence of the immortal, thinking spirit within. In another passage a more full description is given of the soul, chap. i. ver. 27. Endowed him with faculties resembling his own attributes in his perceptive, reflective, and moral powers and feelings. United to the angelic and animal creation, filling up the wondrous chasm between the two.

II. THE PLACE PREPARED FOR HIS RECEPTION. This is called Eden, which signifies a place of pleasure. In the Septuagin it is rendered Paradise, denoting a park, or place of trees. Here the atmosphere was that of life, the earth beautified with flowers and trees. "Every tree," &c. An extensive variety, an overflowing abundance, and that of the most delicious kind. This was man's original earthly estate; here were his princely domains. But two trees are especially alluded to.

1. "*The tree of life.*" This tree seems to have been the sign or pledge, between God and Adam, of the continuance of his life and bliss. Partaking of this he would ever be reminded of his felicity and immortality.

2. "*The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*" By some very strikingly illustrated thus:—The "tree by which the difference between good and evil should be known." From the fruit of this our first parents were prohibited. Here, and here only, was man's responsibility exhibited. This was to be the test of his obedience. We ask, then,

III. AS TO THE ENJOYMENTS ARISING FROM THE OCCUPATION OF EDEN.

1. *Superior earthly dignity.* Adam was God's vicegerent. See the extensive charter ratified by the mouth of Jehovah, Gen. i. 28.

2. *Internal peace and harmony.* The faculties brilliantly reflecting God's glory; the affections, as flames of holy fire, burning in love to God; the conscience transparent and unruffled. No anxiety, no fear.

3. *Celestial and divine communion.* Angels were the visitants, the companions, the friends of our first parents; but God himself was their beloved Father, with whom they had sweet and unbroken fellowship. In one word, the glory and the bliss of our first parents were perfect. But we have

remarked, it was a state of probation, and we must leave the calamitous result for future consideration. Learn,

1. *The goodness of God to man.* How appropriate the song of the son of Jesse, "What is man," &c. Psalm viii. 4. The soul, how precious; do we care for, and seek its restoration to God.

2. *How glorious our world before sin entered.* One vast temple, and every living thing doing homage to the great and unsearchable Deity.

3. *The transitory character of earthly bliss and glory.* The scene has passed away; the whole aspect of things has altered. Eden is lost—paradise forfeited. *How*, you all know; and this must be the subject for future discussion.

PARADISE LOST

"Therefore the Lord sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man."—GENESIS iii. 23, 24.

OUR subject is, Paradise lost. A subject replete with thrilling incident, and one, too, in which we are all personally concerned. In Adam's original moral dignity and Paradise we see a beautiful and appropriate connection. Here holiness and pleasure were united—purity and honor—allegiance and glory. But when sin entirely transformed the nature of man, he was no longer a fit resident of the peaceful bowers of the holy Eden. Let us then inquire,

I. HOW PARADISE WAS LOST.

II. WHAT THAT LOSS INCLUDED. And,

III. IN WHAT MANNER WE ARE AFFECTED BY IT.

I. HOW PARADISE WAS LOST. It was lost,

1. *By sinful credulity.* From the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil our first parents were solemnly prohibited. A dreadful threatening was annexed to the violation of God's command. In these circumstances, Eve, the mother of all living, was assailed by the tempter, through the medium of the serpent. He insidiously reflects on God's goodness in refusing this tree. He specifies the wisdom it would impart. He affirms that death should not follow. These were Satan's fatal devices. By the first, he induced discontent. By the second, ambitious curiosity. By the third, daring presumption. Eve gave credit to Satan. By this sinful credulity was Paradise lost.

2. *By unbelief.* The first sin was credulity towards Satan, but unbelief towards God. God had spoken, had made a direct affirmation, and a firm belief in this would have preserved our parents from ruin. But unbelief enshrouded the mind, the back was turned on God's truth, and the forsaking of the truth was the loss of Paradise.

3. *By disobedience.* This sinful credulity and unbelief decided the course to be adopted, and the hand of disobedience reached forth and took the forbidden fruit. Now this was,

(1.) Wilful disobedience. There was no mistake or misconception. The duty was obvious, and the sin was wittingly and wilfully committed.

(2.) It was voluntary disobedience. They had sufficient power to resist and to stand. Indeed, having a holy nature, the balance of moral power was in favor of persevering uprightness. Satan could not force, did not compel. He suggested, but resistance was practicable. He allured, but the mind could turn away. So that the sin was a voluntary act, and not one of necessity or force.

(3.) It was ungrateful disobedience. By it all the bounty and goodness of God were trampled upon. It was rebellion against God. Treason against his government, &c. Observe, then,

II. WHAT THE LOSS OF PARADISE INCLUDED. There was,

1. *The loss of the place.* Eden was man's inheritance. His princely residence. The garden of enjoyment and pleasure. Here was the original paternal estate. As a traitor to the crown royal it was now justly forfeited.

2. *The loss of dignity and dominion.* No longer did he represent the Deity. No longer a monarch subordinate only to God. No longer provided with every luxury without toil. The garden yielded profusely, man had only to dress it, and nature teemed with every needful good. Now, alas! he must toil and dig, and with the sweat of the brow obtain his daily bread. The ground was cursed for his sake.

3. *It involved the loss of bodily vigor and health.* His body now became vulnerable

and liable to sicken and die. Sin sowed the seeds of disease in the whole of the animal system, and now it tended to its native element, the earth.

4. *The loss of the divine favor and image.* The brightness of the mind was bedimmed. The affections were frozen. The judgment perverted. The conscience defiled. The passions in a state of disorder and confusion. God's goodness and approbation were forfeited. The moral crown was fallen from the head. The snow-white robe was exchanged for unsightly rags, and the very elements seemed to war against his comfort and life. The loss was temporal, bodily, mental, and spiritual. We ask,

III. IN WHAT WAY WE ARE AFFECTED BY IT.

1. *We are partakers of the poverty which it involved.* Not heirs of paradise, but of the wild desert. Our patrimony is lost. Not born princes, but slaves. Just as the descendants of a traitor lose all the benefits of the original family estate.

2. *We are the subjects of the defilement it produced.* An evil corrupt nature was produced by their sin. That nature we inherit, both as it regards the body and the mind. Here as in hereditary diseases, &c.

3. *We are liable to the miseries it inflicted.* Trouble, disease, death. Now to these every man is liable, and what sorrow and suffering they include. We do not say that by the first transgression we are liable to the second death. For though the son of a traitor becomes poor, and probably inherits his father's diseases, yet he is not tried and put to a violent death for his father's crimes. But it is equally clear, that as possessors of a defiled nature, we must be renewed before we are fit for the holy regions of heaven. And a neglect of this will expose us to the second and eternal death. Just as the son of a traitor might be required to take the oath of allegiance, and in the case of neglect might justly be supposed to possess the treasonable spirit of his father, and thus share a similar doom.

APPLICATION.

1. *How profitable to reflect on the true cause of all suffering!* Sin.

2. *This condition has become one of personal guilt in every soul present.* We have all erred and strayed, &c. All have sinned, &c. Not one righteous, &c.

3. *The necessity of supplicating and obtaining mercy.* We must have it or perish Have it, or be punished forever. The gospel reveals it. Offers it. Oh, accep it and live.

HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"—JER. xvii. 9.

"Know thyself," is a maxim of great importance. Without this, other knowledge will be of little use to us. Ignorance of ourselves is wilful blindness. It is the traveller preferring darkness to light. It is the mariner throwing away his compass, and leaving the vessel to drive before the wind. The word of God will assist us in this work of self-investigation and self-knowledge. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Our text presents a fearful picture of the moral condition of the soul, "the heart is deceitful," &c. Our subject is the spiritual anatomy of the heart. Let us ESTABLISH, ILLUSTRATE, and APPLY the TRUTHS it contains.

I. LET US ESTABLISH THE TRUTH OF THE TEXT.

But first, let the text be analyzed. "*The heart*" signifies here the whole soul—the entire mental man—understanding—judgment—conscience—will—passions, &c. *Deceitful* literally signifies crooked, perverse, and wanting in conformity to right rule; it also signifies false, fraudulent, &c. *Wicked* signifies corrupt, criminal, and wholly evil. Now in attempting to establish these truths, we appeal to three kinds of evidence.

1. *The scripture testimony.* God's statement respecting the inhabitants of the old world is equally true now, Gen. vi. 5. Jesus also testified to the same truth, "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, blasphemies, murder," &c. Likened to a cage of unclean birds; corrupt fountain; bad tree, &c. It is also said in scripture, "that the heart is not right with God." "Froward to evil." "Full of evil imaginings." "Full of iniquity and hypocrisy." Hard and impenitent, perverse, rebellious, set to do evil. Then we appeal,

2. *The history of the wicked.* Look at it in Cain; in Pharaoh; in the inhabitants

of Sodom and Gomorrah; envious Jews; in Judas; in the monsters who have been curses to society; moral pests; think of Nero, Caligula, and Burke and Hare of modern times, &c. Here you see what man may become. How vile and horrible. Surely, "the heart is," &c,

3. *To the weakness and sins of good men.* We now go from the worst to the best, from the lowest to the highest. Look at Noah, a perfect man in his generation, and yet by excess, he becomes clothed with shame. Look at Abraham, and yet he dissimulates, and sacrifices truth. Look at Jacob, how he overreaches, and, by fraud, robs his brother. Look at Lot, whose righteous soul, &c. Look at Moses, yet passion gains the ascendency, &c. Look at Aaron, joining with the people in the construction of the golden calf. And what shall we say of David, and Solomon, and Hezekiah, and Peter, and most of the disciples,—suns, but sometimes eclipsed—good men, but only men, and though gracious, yet often the victims of sinful influences. Surely, nothing more strikingly proves that "the heart," &c. But let us,

II. Illustrate the same truth. We shall find the deceitfulness of the heart displayed,

1. *In reference to ourselves.* How often are we deceived by it!

(1.) How often it flatters us, by representing our state as being better than it really is! We may admit our general wickedness and weakness, but how unwilling to enter into detail! How desirous to judge by the more favorable aspects of our character! How ready to magnify our excellencies! And,

(2.) It deceives us by furnishing excuses for our peculiar sins. It pleads our constitution, education, examples, the general influences of those around; the minor character of our sins, &c.

(3.) In keeping us from contemplating the evil consequences of our sins. It shuts out from view death and judgment, eternity and hell. It sings the syren's song, Peace, peace.

(4.) In inducing us to defer repentance, &c. Some future season. The difficulties fewer—opportunities more striking—the aids, &c. more direct.

2. *Our hearts are deceitful to our fellow creatures.* How few would dare the test of allowing a fellow mortal to look within! Who would consent to the removal of the drapery—the withdrawing of the curtain? What attempts to stand well with mankind! What garnishing, concealing, &c. But,

3. *Our hearts are deceitful towards God.* And what madness is this! Look at it in a few instances. Is it not so,

(1.) When we present to him mere external service? He has the lips, hands, feet, knees, our profession, &c., but the spirit, the heart, the lowliness, the humility, &c., are often wanting.

(2.) When we confess our sins, and vow amendment, and yet persist in them?

(3.) When we extol his grace at the expense of justice and righteousness, &c.? "Because sentence against an evil work," &c. Because grace abounds we continue in sin.

(4.) When we expect, although we daily refuse, his mercy? Let these observations suffice. How true our text, &c. But we notice,

4. *The superlative deceitfulness of the heart.* "Deceitful above all things." Sometimes we use the term in reference to material things. We speak of the weather, of the sea. But the heart is deceitful above these. It has misled more, shipwrecked more, &c. Satan is a deceiver, but the heart, under the influence of evil, outvies the prince of darkness, sins against greater love, &c. The heart is the source of deceitfulness, fountain, root, womb—deceitful under all circumstances, prosperity—adversity—health—sickness—life—death—youth—age, &c. It is deceitful beyond our knowledge or description. Who can know it? Not the wisest or the best, &c. God only sees it and understands it. It is deceitful and wicked beyond our power to restore. "Desperately." Human influence and power may restrain and modify, but God alone can heal and renew. He can take away the stony heart, &c., and give a new heart, &c. Let us,

III. Apply the truths of the text. Learn,

1. *The text addresses these truths concerning every one present.* Not one can escape. Let none evade. Let every mouth be stopped. Every breast be smitten. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord!" &c.

2. *Surely such hearts ought not to be trusted.* "Whoso trusteth his own heart," &c. Rather trust the charming of the deadly serpent; rather trust the sinking

quicksand. Let us rather loathe ourselves; cover with sackcloth. But we add,

3. *Let us not be satisfied with such hearts.* They may be cleansed, transformed, sanctified, &c.

"'There is a fountain fill'd with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

O let us repair to the cross! &c. Jesus is able and willing to save, &c. Who will give his heart to God? This is the only alternative. He will make them the temples of the Holy Spirit, &c. Dwell in them. Fill them with his own peace, &c. Finally, the heart must be fully renewed, or excluded heaven. Blessed are the pure in heart, &c. Be ye holy, &c.

THE LAW.

"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."—GALATIANS iii. 10.

I DESIRE on this occasion, to place before you one complete view of the law of God, that we may understand distinctly how we stand connected with it, and the great end it should answer in our experience. Correct views of the law are indispensable to a right understanding of the gospel, and a just knowledge of both is essential to our comfort and salvation. We ask then,

I. WHAT DO WE UNDERSTAND BY THE LAW? Sometimes the term signifies the divine word, the revealed truths of the holy scriptures, &c. Sometimes the whole of the Mosaic dispensation. But in our text we understand it signifying the *moral law.* A law which God wrote upon the hearts and consciences of our first parents. Which was afterwards written upon the tables of stone on Sinai,—and which Jesus has summed up in two great commandments, Matthew xxxii. 37, &c. Every duty to God and to men is included in these.

II. WHAT IS THE CHARACTER OF THIS LAW? A summary of this is given by the great apostle, Romans vii. 12. It is *holy,* the reflection of God's holy mind. *Just,* that is, based on rectitude; not unreasonable, but equitable between man and God, and man and man. *Good,* that is, benevolent, having a kind aspect to those for whom it legislates, and productive of their happiness.

III. WHO ARE UNDER ITS AUTHORITY? All mankind. It is the law of God for the human family. For each person, and for every one. None above it—none beneath it. It is the law of the Creator of every one. The law of the Benefactor, &c., of every one. The law of the great Judge, &c., of every one.

IV. WHAT IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF DISOBEDIENCE? God's curse. That is, every disobedient person is under God's displeasure and frown, and exposed to eternal death. And this curse extends to every transgressor, and for every act of transgression. One sin involves the soul beneath this curse. We ask,

V. WHAT REMEDY DOES THE LAW PROVIDE FOR TRANSGRESSORS? Our text contains none, and the law of God recognises none,—it cannot relax its claims,—it cannot allow of one violation,—it cannot bless one transgressor. It will not be satisfied with repentance, floods of tears avail nothing. It refers to its purity, &c., and demands satisfaction. It is not met by reformation. It says, Pay me what thou owest! The law is inexorable. It blesses the obedient, but curses the sinner.

VI. CAN ANY ONE THEN BE SAVED BY THE LAW? We reply, no, not one. For this reason, There is none righteous, &c. All have sinned, &c. Every man then is condemned by the law, and not one can have any hope from it. We ask then,

VII. WHAT END THE LAW IS DESIGNED TO ANSWER?

1. *By it we see what are the just claims of God.* Here we behold the extensive and perfect obedience he requires.

2. *By it we are brought under conviction of sin.* By the law is the knowledge of sin; see Romans vii. 9. That is, living without the *law* there was no impression of evil, no sense of guilt. But when the commandment of God came with power to the conscience, and I saw its just demands, then my sin revived. I saw myself guilty, and exposed to death. All my former hopes at once expired.

3. *By the law all self-righteousness is to be destroyed.* A consciousness of its demands, and our disobedience, clearly show us, that by the deeds of the law no living flesh can be justified. As a criminal by referring to the statute book, would only

read his sentence, so by the law, we read our exposedness to death, and must at once perceive that from the works of the law there is not the least hope of salvation.

4. *The law is to be our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.* To instruct us as to our duty, our guilt, our peril, our helplessness, and our need of a Saviour. So that when we exclaim, "O wretched man that I am," &c., this then refers us to Christ, who alone can save us from the curse of the law, Romans viii. 3. "For what the law could not do," &c. Here then we have a door of hope,—not on Sinai, but Zion,—not from the law, but the gospel,—not from Moses, but Jesus. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, &c., Galatians iii. 13. An interest in Christ saves us from all the consequences of sin, both in this life, and that which is to come. From present condemnation—"There is therefore no condemnation," &c. And from endless wrath —"The gift of God is eternal life," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. How do you stand connected with the law? Some perhaps are alive in their own indifference, &c. to it. Never felt their sins to be a burden, &c. What will you do when the law flashes across your souls in death or judgment? Others may be seeking heaven by the deeds of the law. How foolish and fruitless! One sin condemns, and binds over to eternal death. Others I trust are convicted of sin. The law has revived it, &c., and they exclaim in sorrow before God,

"Guilty I stand before thy face,
On me I feel thy wrath abide,
'Tis just, the sentence should take place:
'Tis just, but oh, thy Son has died!"

Many of you, I trust, are rejoicing in Christ's free and justifying grace. Being justified by faith, &c.

2. Learn how God alone is glorified in our salvation. He has provided for us the Redeemer. "In the fulness of the times God sent forth," &c.

3. Let his love and mercy be exalted.

4. Let all our hopes rest continually on the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

OUR LOSS IN ADAM, AND GAIN IN CHRIST.

"Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."—ROMANS v. 18

IN this chapter the apostle is exhibiting both the ruin and recovery of mankind; our ruin in Adam—our recovery in Christ. The reasoning more immediately connected with the text commences with verse 12. Both these doctrines are important, and both must be felt in order to the enjoyment of true peace. The diseased only need and seek the physician's aid—the guilty only feel their guilt, and apply to God for salvation. Both these doctrines have been perverted and abused. As to man's fallen condition, it has been said that the reverse is true—that all men are born pure, and if any evil has arisen from the sin of our first parents, it only affects the physical system of man. As to man's recovery, it has been said, that through Christ all will be eventually saved; hence has been taught the doctrine of the universal restitution of all things, and the final salvation of all the human race. Now, both of these doctrines we consider perversions of God's word, contrary to the genius and spirit of revelation. But there is another class of doctrines the very reverse of these, which we consider equally unscriptural. In reference to the fall, it has been taught, that by Adam's guilt all men not only partake of his depravity, but are chargeable with his sin, and are justly condemned for it; and, therefore, original sin, it is said, might justly exclude us from heaven, and consign us to perdition. In reference to our recovery it has been taught, that Christ only came to be the redeemer and head of a select number of the human race, and that the rest are without atonement, and, consequently, without hope of mercy. These doctrines are the extremes of each other, and, we believe, are both opposed to the true testimony of revelation. The gospel declaration we conceive to go midway between the two, and this we shall labor to establish. We ask, then,

I. WHAT HAVE WE LOST THROUGH ADAM?

II. WHAT HAVE WE OBTAINED BY CHRIST?

Imagination and conjecture we must discharge in both cases, and abide by the declaration of God's word. We ask, then,

I. WHAT HAVE WE LOST THROUGH ADAM? It has been supposed that if our first parents had been faithful, that their posterity would have been necessarily happy, &c.

This is not so much as hinted at in the scriptures, and we consider as opposed to the responsibility of the creature, which we believe always to be personal and not relative. But, we observe—we lost paradise, that earthly domain of bliss, &c.—we lost health and immortality, and became exposed to disease and death—we lost our moral glory and purity, and became partakers of the fallen nature of our first parents; as such we became obnoxious to God's holiness, and unfit for his presence and glory. Universal guilt is the necessary result of our depraved nature, for it is natural for that which is evil to sin, and only supernaturally that it can do good and follow holiness. We perceive, thus, that all men are, by their own personal guilt, exposed to the just wrath of God, and he may righteously punish them with eternal death. Such is our reply to the first question. We ask,

II. What have we obtained by Christ? Now, I reply to this, that unconditional eternal life is not secured to any person; that is, that God will not, on account of Christ's merits, save any man without respect to personal character. But Jesus Christ has obtained for man the means of his restoration to God's favor and likeness, and, consequently, to eternal glory. God's holy law Christ has honored and magnified—he has also paid its penalty by the sacrifice of his own life. Thus the law of God has been rendered illustrious before angels and fallen spirits—through Christ's atoning merits God can now be just, &c. God does not grant eternal life on the ground of works, but as a free gift, through Jesus Christ. And God has determined that all who come to him by Christ shall receive the forgiveness of sin, and the spirit of grace and holiness, to renew their hearts, and enable them to do the will of God, &c. Now, this offer of eternal life is the grand subject of the gospel—"this is the record," &c. Christ has placed the whole of our race, therefore, in a condition of salvation. There is no reason, on God's part, why all men may not be saved, &c. But we must also advance another truth following this—that men, so far from being losers by the fall, may be gainers even in an eminent degree.

(1.) We stand not now on the responsibility of our own strength, which in Adam failed, but on the promised grace of Christ. Christ's fulness of wisdom, and power, and ability are all mine. How superior to a creature's ability, however distinguished!

(2.) The loss of earthly good and glory are more than compensated by the glory and felicity of a future world. For paradise, heaven—for the visits of angels, the temple in which they dwell, &c.—for the pleasures of sense in Eden, the beatific vision of God in glory—heaven instead of earth. Now, this gracious advantage is the high privilege of all men; all men are eligible, and on terms within the reach of all. To deny this is to contradict the spirit and letter of the text, and also verse 20. I would remark, in conclusion,

1. Your loss in Adam has been aggravated by your own guilt. All have sinned—all, therefore, are exposed to death and perdition.

2. In Christ there is opened to you the door of hope and mercy. Will you enter? You may if you will. God says this; with you, therefore, is the alternative. God says ask—seek—knock. He says, *come*. The Spirit and the bride say, Come, &c.

3. Let the Christian exult in the grace by Christ Jesus. His life-boat is vastly more safe than the bark of Adam's original responsibility. Oh, yes! here is grace abounding to the sinner's weal and the glory of God.

4. All the lost are self-ruined. Yes! every one.

MAN'S HELPLESSNESS, AND GOD'S COMPASSION.

"None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out into the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee," &c.—Ezek. xvi. 5, 6.

Our text contains a description of the original condition of the house of Israel, and the surpassing condescension and compassion of God towards them. This is followed by a recital of the apostacy and sins of the people against the goodness of the Lord their God. The fearful picture concludes with the announcement of God's mercy and grace, notwithstanding their transgression against him. The text, however, is very applicable to the original state of every human being; and, contemplated as such, it is calculated to fill us with the

spirit of humiliation, adoration, and praise. Observe,

I. OUR NATURAL ESTATE. This is most fitly represented,

1. *As polluted.* "Saw thee polluted." The fact of man's defilement by sin is abundantly established by the declarations of the word of God. All men are transgressors, and every kind of transgression defiles and pollutes the soul. The understanding is polluted by ignorance, the judgment by error and falsehood, the affections y earthliness and self, the conscience by wilful disobedience; so that the prophet's description of Israel is truly applicable to the unrenewed, unconverted children of men, Isa. i. 5, 6—"The whole head is sick," &c.

2. *As outcasts.* "But thou wast cast out." Sin and holiness cannot have communion with each other. The blessed God cannot be pleased with impure and polluted man. Thus angels were expelled the mansions of glory; thus Adam and Eve the abodes of Eden; and thus sin exiles every one of its victims from the divine presence and favor. The sinner is said to be afar off; alienated, &c. by wicked works; as rebels, outcasts from his kingdom; as prodigals, far from our heavenly Father's house; dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death.

3. *As unpitied.* "None eye pitied thee." Angels are as holy and just as they are kind and benevolent. They could not feel for traitors against their God—could not delight in rebel spirits, or have complacency in iniquity. Fallen spirits rejoiced in ruining the hopes and blighting the prospects of mankind, and man had no pity towards himself. Deluded and perverted in all his faculties and powers, he saw not his shame, and felt not his misery.

4. *As necessarily perishing.* Dying of disease, of weakness, of exposure; dying for want of help. Consider the figure of an infant thus cast out—its helplessness—must perish. So our ruin had been certain, and unavoidable, and eternal. Notice,

II. THE COMPASSIONATE REGARDS OF GOD TOWARDS US. He is represented as passing by and observing the condition of fallen, polluted humanity, and exercising mercy towards them. These regards,

1. *Were the result of rich and spontaneous mercy.* No reasons to induce Deity—none in the aspect of the sinner—none in the cause of his ruin—self-destroyed—none in his solicitude for deliverance—none in the return he could make. It was mercy originating in mercy, for mercy's sake alone, that caused him to bend over our ruined race. These regards,

2. *Were expressed towards us in promises of love.* "I said unto thee, Live." How analogous, too, the threatening was! Dying thou shalt die. But God, who was rich in mercy, when he saw our ruined state, promised deliverance and restoration. From the entrance of sin to our redemption, God filled the mouths of prophets with assurances of his grace and favor. By faith Abel and the patriarchs, and fathers, and prophets, looked through the promises given for the mercy of God to eternal life. These regards,

3. *Were embodied in the person of the Mediator.* That we might live he chose a Mediator. He sent him as the fountain of life. He came and proclaimed it. "I am come that ye might have life," &c. "I am the resurrection," &c. Yea, Jesus, as the exhibition of God's love, died in the stead of the ungodly, and bore in his own body our sins upon the tree. The poet has beautifully presented this to us:

> "Plunged in a gulf of dark despair,
> We wretched sinners lay:
> Without one cheering beam of hope,
> Or spark of glimmering day.
>
> "With pitying eyes the Prince of Peace
> Beheld our helpless grief;
> He saw; and, oh! amazing love!
> He ran to our relief."

The gospel just reiterates these regards, assuring us that God sent his Son into the world not to condemn, &c.

4. *A believing reception of God's merciful arrangement brings life into the soul.* God now sends his messengers to invite the outcasts to live—to offer them life—to persuade them to have it, but to have it in Jesus, and in Jesus alone; and he that believeth the messenger of grace lives. God justifies him freely—saves him from condemnation—regenerates his heart by his quickening Spirit—raises to a new and holy life of faith in the Son of God, &c.; and this life is perfected and consummated in eternal glory. The gift of God is eternal life. This is the record that God hath given unto us, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the wretched state of our fallen species.* How necessary to see this clearly, and feel it intensely.

2. *The unsearchableness of God's mercy.* God only knows the love of God to man:

> "'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
> For oh, my God! it found out me"

3. *That salvation is of grace.* From first to last. The grace of God bringeth, applieth, and consummates the work.

4. *The claims of Deity on our gratitude, love, and obedience.*

THE DISTINCTIONS IN THE GODHEAD.

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."—MATT. xxviii. 19.

DIVINE revelation makes known to us one living and true God, and prohibits all worship being paid to any being except Jehovah. But the phraseology employed obviously presents the one Jehovah under certain distinctions, involving the idea of a plurality in the Godhead. This distinction has been generally denominated the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The doctrine has been controverted in all ages, and numerous are the theories which men have endeavored to maintain on this deeply profound, and confessedly difficult subject. The advocates of the trinity may be arranged under several distinctions. So also the opponents are diversified in sentiment, from the high Arian to the low Socinian. Our present purpose is to exhibit some of the representations of this subject as given in the infallible records of inspired truth.

I. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT A THREEFOLD DISTINCTION IN DEITY IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE. We have many symbols of this in nature: the sun—the light, and heat thereof; man—body, soul, and spirit. Grotius thus illustrated the doctrine:

> "May we not some such thing in mankind see;
> LIFE, REASON, WILL, in one are three;
> Are Father, Son, and Spirit equal? they
> With equal might one sceptre sway."

It is presumptuous to say, that there cannot be three persons in the Godhead.

II. THE OLD TESTAMENT WRITINGS LEAD US TO THIS CONCLUSION. In the very first page of the sacred oracles it is written, "In the beginning God created," &c. The Hebrew word is in the plural number. Again, "Let *us* make man,' &c. "Behold, the man is become as one of *us*," &c. Gen. ii. 22. "Let *us* go down," &c. Gen. ii. 7. The Jewish benediction—"The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee," &c. Numbers vi. 24, &c. The same view of Deity pervades the writings of the prophets. See Psalm xlv. 6, 7, cx. 1, cxxxvi. 1–3; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3; Isaiah vi. 8, also verse 3; Isaiah xlii. 1, xlviii. 16, lix. 19, 20; Zech. ii. 10, 11.

III. THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT EXHIBIT THIS TRIUNE DISTINCTION. See it in the baptism of Jesus, Matt. iii. 16, 17. See it also in several striking expressions in the teaching of Christ, John xiv. 16, xv. 26; Acts i. 4, 5; especially as connected with the great commission, Matt. xxviii. 19. It is often incidentally exhibited in other portions of the New Testament writings. See Acts v. 30–35; Stephen's vision, Acts vii. 55, x. 38, xx. 27, 28; Rom. v. 5, 6, xv. 30; see also the apostolic benediction, 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

IV. THE DIVINE WORKS ARE ASCRIBED TO EACH OF THE TRIUNE PERSONS.

1. *Creation.* "In the beginning God created the heavens," &c. By the "Word all things were made, &c. By "his Spirit" he hath garnished the heavens, Job xxvi. 13; see also Psalm civ. 30.

2. *The work of inspiration.* "God shall reveal this unto you," Phil. iii. 15. "The revelation of Jesus Christ," Gal. i. 12. "The Holy Spirit shall teach you all things," John xiv. 26. "God spake unto the fathers by the prophets," Heb. i. 1. "The word of Christ," Col. iii. 16. "Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Pet. i. 21.

3. *The work of holiness.* "Sanctified of God the Father," Jude 1. "He that sanctifieth," &c., Heb. ii. 11. "Sanctified by the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv. 16.

4. *The work of raising the dead.* The Father raiseth up the dead, John v. 21; Rom. iv. 17; 2 Cor. i. 9. Christ raiseth the dead, John v. 21, xi. 25. The Spirit raiseth the dead. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth," John vi. 63. We observe,

V. THAT THE ESSENTIAL TITLES AND ATTRIBUTES ARE GIVEN TO FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT.

1. *Eternity.* "The eternal God," Deut. xxxiii. 27. The Son—Before all things

Col. i. 17. The Spirit—The eternal Spirit, Heb. ix. 14.

2. *Omnipresence.* "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord," Jer. xxiii. 24. The Son—"Filleth all in all," Eph. i. 23. The Spirit—"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit," Psalm cxxxix. 7.

3. *Omniscience.* "Known unto God are all his works," Acts xv. 18. The Son—"He knew all men," &c., John ii. 24. The Spirit—see 1 Cor. ii. 10, &c.

4. *Power.* "Power belongeth unto God," Psalm lxii. 11. Christ—"All power is given unto me," &c., Matt. xxviii. 18. The Spirit—"Through the power of the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv. 13.

5. *Wisdom.* "Wisdom and might are his," Dan. ii. 20. The Son—"In him are hid all the treasures," &c., Col. ii. 2, 3. Holy Spirit—"He is the Spirit of wisdom," Isaiah xi. 2; Eph. i. 17. It is clear, from this great variety of scripture quotation, that the scriptures recognise a plurality in the godhead, and give to each the titles and perfections of proper Deity.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. With what reverence and profound veneration we should study the nature and character of God! How awfully sublime is the theme—how utterly incompetent we must be to find it out to perfection—how essentially requisite holy fear and humility of mind in its investigation!

2. We should labor to ascertain the connection between the divine persons in the godhead, and the exercises of devotion and worship. We are to come to God through the Son and by the Holy Spirit. We are thus, also, to praise God, and to pray to him. The Father is chiefly the object of worship, Christ is the way, and by the Spirit we worship him in spirit and in truth. God our Father—God our Redeemer—God our Comforter and guide.

3. Divine honors are to be equally given to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

4. Let us labor to obtain and enjoy the love of the Father, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit.

"To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—
The God whom we adore—
Be glory, as it was and is,
And shall be evermore."

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

NO. I.

"Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen"—Rom. ix. 5.

It is impossible by any legitimate mode of interpretation to apply the words of the text to any other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And if they apply to Christ only, then it is evident that they clearly establish the perfect Deity of the Saviour. It cannot be supposed that the apostle would indulge in rapturous flights of imagination at the expense of the essential truths of religion. So that we must either expunge this striking portion of the word from the pages of truth, or the divinity of the Lord Jesus is fully and irrefragably exhibited. But a doctrine of such moment does not rest on one isolated text however clear, peremptory, and conclusive. It is a doctrine diffused through the volume of inspiration. It is a prominent truth of the sacred writers. Let us then explain, establish, and apply the subject. Let us,

I. Explain what we mean by the divinity of the Saviour. It is obvious that some mysterious distinction exists between the Son of God and the Father; and between the Son of God and the Holy Spirit. Yet the distinction does not affect the unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit. And the divinity of Christ clearly involves oneness of essence, nature, and glory with the Father; that is, equality with the Father in majesty, dignity, and power. We cannot enter upon the various hypotheses regarding the expression "Son of God," as to its proper eternity, or as to its application to Christ in his incarnate state; or as to the pre-existence of the human soul of the Redeemer. We believe the scriptures to teach the uncreated, divine, and perfect godhead of Jesus Christ.

II. Let us establish this truth. Our evidence is varied and immense. We refer,

1. *To the testimony of the writers of the Old Testament scriptures.* In the forty-fifth psalm as applied to Christ by the apostle, "Thy throne, O God," &c. In the sixty-eighth psalm, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand," &c. This is also applied to Christ, Eph. iv. 8. The seventy-second psalm is also clearly a prediction of Christ's kingdom and glory. See espe-

cially the seventeenth verse to end. In the seventy-eighth psalm it is said, "Israel tempted the most high God." Let this be compared with 1 Cor. x. 3. Compare also the eighty-ninth psalm with Col. i. 15; Rev. xix. 16. So also the ninety-seventh psalm, ver. 7, with Heb. i. 6; see also Isaiah vi. 1, &c. vii. 14, viii. 13, 15, ix. 6, &c. xl. 32, xl. 9, 10, xlv. 22, lii. 7, liii. 13; Micah v. 2; Jer. xxiii. 5, 6; Dan. vii. 13; Zech. ii. 10, &c. xiii. 7; Malachi iii. 1. Observe,

2. *The testimonies of Christ to his own divinity.*

(1.) Observe the confessions made to, and of him. John the Baptist, John iii. 35—Nathaniel, John i. 49—Matthew, John xi. 27—Peter, John vi. 68, 69; Matt. xvi. 13. The devils, Luke iv. 41. Voice from heaven, Matt. v. 16, xvii. 5—Thomas, John xx. 26.

(2.) Observe his own direct statements: "No man hath ascended," &c. John iii. 13. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory," &c. John xvii. 1. "Before Abraham was," &c. John viii. 56, &c. "For where two or three," &c. Matt. xviii. 19. "He that hath seen me," &c. John xiv. 9. "All that the Father hath are mine," John xvi. 15. "I and my Father are one," John x. 30. "That all men should honor," &c. "I am Alpha," &c. Rev. i. 8; John v. 12, 13.

3. *The apostolic testimony to the divinity of Christ.* The dying testimony of Stephen, Acts vii. 55, 60. The prayer of the apostles respecting the lot cast for the election of an apostle, Acts ii. 24. "Jesus Christ is Lord of all," Acts x. 26. "Being exalted," &c. Acts ii. 53. Observe the distinct exclamations of Peter, "Everlasting kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. i. 11, also 2 Pet. i. 1. "To him be glory," &c. 2 Pet. iii. 18. James—"Lord of glory," chap. ii. 1. Jude—"Denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ," ver. 4, see Whitby on this passage. "To the only wise God our Saviour," ver. 25. Paul—"The Lord of glory," 1 Cor. ii. 8. "The Lord from heaven," 1 Cor. xv. 47. "That he might fill all things," Eph. iv. 9. "Let this mind be in you," &c. Phil. ii. 5. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19; see Col. ii. 3, ii. 9. John—"The word was God," John i. 1. "Hereby we perceive the love of God," &c. 1 John iii. 1. "This is the true God," &c. 1 John v. 20. "And on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings," &c. Rev. xix. 16.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. If these passages do not establish the divinity of the Saviour, then it is impossible to understand the writings we term the holy scriptures. They are ambiguous beyond all the writings ever given to the world. There is no principle of interpretation that can lead us to their true signification. But believing the word of God to be a revelation and not a mystification, then at once we must perceive that the divinity of Christ is one of those doctrines which of all others is most prominently declared. Prophets, evangelists, apostles, all concur in their testimony to this subject.

2. Christ can have no claim upon our confidence, if he be not truly divine. The legitimate reading of his own word, his own teaching concerning himself, evidently was designed to make himself known as co-equal with the Father, and the divine Son of God with glory and power.

3. A proper view of this subject is essential to a right direction of Christian conduct. A divine Saviour must have a claim upon us that it would be presumption for any created being to assume. We may venerate and esteem a human saviour, but we can only adore, and trust, and worship a Saviour who is divine. Prayer, and faith, and hope are only meet to Jesus on the ground of the supreme Godhead, and essential Deity.

4. The incomprehensibility of the doctrine is no argument against its truth. Equally so is the existence of one eternal Jehovah, it is one of the confessed mysteries of revelation. "Great is the mystery of godliness," &c. "Then to the law and to the testimony," &c. "Search the scriptures," &c.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

NO. II.

"Who is over all, God blessed for ever."—Rom. ix. 5.

In a previous discourse we have examined the testimony of prophets, evangelists, and apostles, concerning the divinity of Jesus Christ. We also adverted to the

declarations of Jesus himself. We now proceed to establish the same truth.

1. *From his divine works.* The works which are ascribed to God, and beyond the power of any creature, are fully and frequently ascribed to Christ.

(1.) Creation. Of the Word that was made flesh, it is written, "All things were made by him," &c. John i. 3; "by whom are all things," &c. 1 Cor. viii. 6; "by him were all things created that are in heaven," &c. Col. i. 16; "by whom also he made the worlds," &c. Heb. i. 2.

(2.) Universal dominion. He is Lord of all, "the Father hath given all things into his hands," &c. "By him all things consist," Col. i. 16, 17. See Phil. ii. 9, &c.

(3.) Resurrection of the body. "As the Father raiseth up the dead, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live," John v. 21, 25. "I will raise him up at the last day," John vi. 40. "Who shall change our vile body," &c. Phil. iii. 21. "I am the resurrection and the life," John xi. 25.

(4.) The judgment of the world. "The Son of man shall come in his glory," &c. Matt. xxv. 31. "The Father hath committed all judgment," &c. John v. 22. "The judge of the quick and dead," Acts x. 42. "God hath appointed a day," &c. xvii. 31. "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," Rom. xiv. 10.

(5.) The bestowment of eternal rewards, and the infliction of everlasting punishments. "I give unto my sheep eternal life. Then shall he say to them on his right hand," &c. Matt. xxv. 34. See also, to the wicked, ver. 41. Mark viii. 38.

2. *From his divine perfections.*

(1.) Omniscience. "Jesus knew their thoughts," Matt. ix. 4. "He knew all men," John ii. 2. "Thou, Lord, who knowest the thoughts of all men," Acts i. 24. "I am he who searcheth the reins and heart," Rev. ii. 23.

(2.) Omnipresence. "Lo, I am with you always," &c. Matt. xxviii. 18. "Wherever two or three are gathered together," &c. See John iii. 13.

(3.) Omnipotence. "To him be power everlasting," 1 Tim. vi. 16. "The Almighty," Rev. i. 8. "Christ the power of God," 1 Cor. i. 24.

(4.) Immutability. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," Heb. xiii. 8.

(5.) Eternity and self-existence. "I am Alpha and Omega," &c. "The first and the last." "I have power to lay down my life," &c. John i. 18. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself," John v. 26.

3. *From the divine homage and worship presented to him.*

(1.) He, with the Father, is the proper object of prayer and invocation. "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord," &c. Matt. vii. 21. "With all that call on the name of the Lord Jesus," Acts xxii. 16. Thus Paul besought the Lord thrice, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 9. Thus Stephen's dying request. See also, 2 Tim. ii. 22. Rom. x. 12, 14.

(2.) He is the proper object of adoration and praise. The Father gave the mandate, "Let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 6. He hath also determined, "That all men should honor the Son, even," &c. John v. 22, 23. "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow," Phil. ii. 1, &c. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord," 1 Tim. i. 12. "Unto him that loved us," &c. Rev. i. 5, 6. "And they worshipped him," &c. Luke xxiv. 50, 52. Observe also the celestial hosts all unite in highest praise to Christ, Rev. v. 3–13, and vii. 10. Nothing can be added to give weight to this indisputable array of divine testimony to the true and proper Godhead of Jesus. Let us then,

III. Apply the subject. Learn,

1. The dishonor done to Christ, by robbing him of his divine character. It involves some measure of unbelief, often the result of unsanctified reasoning. Must grieve the Father, is ungrateful to the Son, and reflects on the Holy Spirit, who has so fully exhibited the Deity of Christ.

2. Learn the claim Christ has on our confidence and love. He demands an entire, undivided trust. Our supreme love. He claims the throne of the heart.

3. Learn the duties we owe to him. Attention to his word; obedience to his authority; regard to his ordinances; delight in his service; zeal for his glory. We should live to him, and die to him, and thus forever be the Lord's.

4. The fulness of blessing there is in the divine Saviour. His power is all-sufficient to aid in every time of need, &c. Grace is an inexhaustible fulness. "Full of grace," &c. "Unsearchable riches of grace," and everlasting treasures of glory

are hid in him. What a desirable friend! What a glorious Saviour! "He is all, and in all," &c.

5. The terribleness of Christ as an enemy. His wrath is terrible, &c. He will break his enemies in pieces, &c.

CHRIST THE MEDIATOR.

"For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."—1 Tim. ii. 5.

Our text relates to one of the most important subjects of revelation, and that which is the very essence of the gospel—the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is of great importance to have scriptural and clear views of this all-essential doctrine. It is a doctrine inseparably identified with our peace, and comfort, and salvation. It is the great cardinal pillar of redemption, the very keystone of the arch of Christianity.

Let us then ascertain,

I. The person of the mediator.
II. The work of the mediator. And
III. The results of his mediation.

I. The person of the mediator. Now on this subject I desire to present to you the leading divisions of sentiment which have been maintained and taught. We refer,

1. *To those who teach the manhood of Christ only.* Who represent Jesus as never existing prior to his birth of the virgin, and that he stands only at the head of the created servants of God, and the divinely appointed author of the Christian religion, as Moses was of the Levitical economy. This is the Socinian doctrine.

2. *To those who teach that Christ is the highest and first-born of every creature.* Made before all worlds, and therefore more glorious than any of the angels. Yet only a created being, &c. This is Arianism.

3. *To those who taught that there is but one person in the Godhead.* That he descended into the virgin, became a Son, and accomplished our salvation, then diffused himself on the apostles in tongues of fire, and was thus denominated the Holy Ghost. This is Sabellianism.

4. *Those who teach that there is one person only in the Godhead, viz. Jesus Christ.* And that he came into the world to glorify his human nature, by making it one with the divine, and that the human nature itself is now divine. This is Swedenborgianism.

We believe that the scriptures teach a doctrine respecting the Mediator, essentially distinct from each and all of these, viz. That in the Godhead there are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That God sent his Son, who clothed himself with our nature and became God and man in one person. That Christ was God, is evident *from the titles given to him,* "Immanuel," "God is with us," "The mighty God," "Thy throne, O God," &c. *From his perfections of omniscience,* &c. Omnipresent, &c.—"Wherever two or three are gathered together." Eternally,—"Before Abraham was," &c. "Alpha and Omega," &c. *From his works.* Creation—providence—judgment. *From the homage and worship,* &c. "Let all the angels of God," &c. "Worthy is the Lamb," &c. Yet it is evident that he is distinct from the Father and the Holy Ghost, John xiv. 16, 26, xv. 26, xvii. 1, 24; Matt. xxviii. 19. But our text asserts the manhood of the Saviour. This needs no confirmation. "God sent his Son," &c. But there was a necessity why he should be both.

1. *That he should be man,*

(1.) Having the nature of those for whom he mediated.

(2.) That he should be under the law.

(3.) Be capable of suffering.

(4.) That he should be able to sympathize.

(5.) That he should be a perfectly holy man, without sin or spot.

2. *That he should be God.*

(1.) To have power to redeem, &c.

(2.) To have power over the devil and death, to give infinite value to his obedience; the service of any mere man could only have availed for himself.

(3.) To be an object of absolute trust to all his believing people. Such is the person of the blessed Mediator.

II. The work of the Mediator. To mediate, is to interpose between two who are at variance, and endeavor to effect reconciliation. Sin separated man from God. From his allegiance,—image,—and favor. Sin clothed Deity with the vestments of righteous indignation and wrath. Man thus became not only fallen, but in peril of endless death. God could not allow sin to

go unpunished, without falsifying his character, and throwing confusion into the universe. Yet his mercy triumphed towards us in that he provided a Mediator. So that the *gift* of Christ was the *effect* of God's love to the world. The work of Christ, then, has two distinct aspects.

(1.) To lay a solid foundation for the exercise of God's love with honor to the divine government and laws. He appeared, therefore, as a man, and the law demanded from him perfect obedience. He gave it—yielded every jot and tittle it demanded. He thus honored the great Lawgiver in all his blessed perfections. He offered his own precious life as a substituted sacrifice on behalf of a guilty world, that the penalty of the law might be fully met. He thus bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He conquered the enemies of man—Satan, death, and the grave. Thus God's love could honorably flow to man.

(2.) In his work he had to bring men to God. As mediator he obtains a time of probation for the guilty. He issues the proclamation of his grace in the gospel. He sends down the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify the believer. He presents the persons and services of his people to God as their High-priest and intercessor. This then is the work of Christ as mediator.

III. The results of his mediation.

1. *A glorious display of the purity and compassion of God.* God is now displayed as the just God, and yet the Saviour. Hating sin, yet loving the sinner. Pouring out his wrath, yet freely dispensing his mercy.

2. *Salvation is now freely revealed and offered to mankind.* Now the gospel may be indeed styled the good news, the glad tidings. "Through this man is preached unto you remission of sins," &c. "This we know and testify," &c. Now Christ is held up to a lost world as the way, and the truth, &c.

3. *The impenitent are now without excuse.*

"No mortal hath a just pretence,
To perish in despair."

The soul's ruin is now connected with the rejection of Christ. For those who despise him there is no more sacrifice for sin.

APPLICATION.

1. How beautifully Christ's mediation harmonizes with the gospel plan of salvation! Now we have not to do with God directly, but with God in Christ. To be saved we must place our interests in his hands. This is believing, trusting, appropriating, &c.

2. We learn that there is but one Mediator. No other way or name, and no other intercessor. It is anti-scriptural to pray to saints or angels. Christ is the one Mediator.

3. Let us rejoice in the light and glory of the gospel.

THE PREDICTED CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

"Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations, the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard, shall they consider."—Isaiah lii. 13, &c.

Our text is a distinct subject from that discussed in the previous parts of the chapter, and evidently ought to have formed a part of the 53d chapter of the evangelical prophet. It is most clearly a prophecy concerning the Messiah. It relates both to his official character, sufferings, exaltation, and conquests; and as such is replete with deeply interesting matter for our profitable meditation. Observe,

I. The office of Christ. God's servant. "My servant." The same phrase is used in 40th chapter, 1st verse. Christ in his mediatorial character, was God's servant, while in his essential glory, he was God blessed forevermore.

1. *Hearken to his own declarations.* "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto," &c. "I must work," &c. "I came to do the will of my Father." Even at twelve years of age he said, "Wist ye not," &c. So at the end of his life, he said, "I have glorified thee," &c., "have finished the work," &c. Christ ever recognised himself as God's servant.

2. *Observe how he discharged the office of servant.* Here we are struck with,

(1.) His fidelity. He was faithful in all things—never omitted one of the requirements of his Father; did all his will, and that perfectly.

(2.) His zeal—His Father's honor and glory ever melted his ardent soul. "The zeal of thy house," &c. This feeling con-

sumed his sacred spirit. How it burst forth in the temple, &c.

(3.) His perseverance. He held on his course with undeviating constancy; never turned aside; was faithful unto death. The text refers to,

(4.) His prudence. The word in the margin is "prosper," but our translation would lead us to view one striking feature in his office—the wisdom which distinguished his course. Now this shone forth as the light of the sun at noonday. In his discourses to his disciples—in his replies to his enemies, "never man spake like this man." Never could entangle him, &c. Infallibility marked all he said and did. The subject leads us,

II. To the sufferings he should bear. "As many were astonished." All Christ's engagements were astonishing—his sayings—his actions; but the words evidently refer to his sufferings. That a personage so illustrious, should be so abased.—So glorious, should appear so poor.—So holy, should be so reproached.—So powerful, should endure so much.—So heavenly, should drink of the cup of sorrow so intensely, &c. "His visage was so marred," &c. Hear the predictions of the prophet, all of which were so literally fulfilled. Psalm xxii. 6, &c.; see also 3 and 4 of the next chapter. How bitterly was he calumniated! How maliciously he was persecuted! How basely was he treated! How cruelly he was tortured! Especially in Herod's hall, and when preparing him for his ignominious death, he might well exclaim, "I am the man who hath seen affliction," &c. "See, is there any sorrow," &c. The lions seized his soul; the waves went over his head; the storm beat upon his spirit. Observe,

III. The exaltation of christ. "He shall be exalted," &c.

1. *Christ was exalted.*

(1.) In his resurrection from the dead. "Him did God raise up, for it was impossible that he should be holden," &c. He spoiled the projects of the powers of darkness, in bursting the prison-house of the grave. "I am he that was dead," &c.

(2.) He was exalted by his elevation to the right hand of the throne of God. "He ascended on high," &c. God said, "Sit thou on my right hand," &c. "Him hath God exalted," &c.

2. *He shou'd be extolled.* That is, praised—his character celebrated, &c.—Now,

(1.) Angels extolled him as their Lord, heralded him back again to his kingdom and glory, "Open the everlasting doors," &c.

(2.) John heard all the celestial hosts of heaven extolling him in their anthems of praise, "Worthy is the Lamb," &c.

(3.) His ministering servants and people extol him on earth.

"'Tis all our business here below,
To cry, Behold the Lamb."

He is fairer than the children of men.

(4.) He shall be extolled by his redeemed saints forever. "Daily shall he be praised," &c. "His praise shall sound from shore to shore," &c. The last sounds that shall be heard in reference to our world will be the voice of praise to Christ. "Hallelujah! for the kingdoms of this world," &c.

3. *He shall be very high.* Exalted to the throne of supreme authority, power, and glory. Thus he was beheld by Ezekiel—above seraphim and cherubim—receiving the homage and obedience of all in heaven and on earth. Notice,

IV. His gracious conquests.

1. "*He shall sprinkle,*" *&c.* He does so,

(1.) By his doctrines. His blessed word falls as the rain, distils as the dew, &c.

(2.) By his blood. When these doctrines are received, then man partakes of the merits of his death, and the cleansing virtues of his blood. The blood of Christ is called the blood of sprinkling.

(3.) By his spiritual blessings. The outpourings of his Holy Spirit, and the rich communications of his mercy and love.

2. *He shall silence the opposition of kings.* These shall oppose the gospel, and employ worldly power and authority against it. But he shall overturn, &c. See Psalm ii. 12. See the change as exhibited, Psalm lxxii. 10.

3. *His achievements shall be unprecedented and wonderful.* "For that which had not been told," &c. Now two things shall particularly astonish.

(1.) The simplicity of his means. Not by carnal weapons, not by human power, not by armies, &c., nor by science, but by the word of grace, and the messengers of salvation; by the foolishness of preaching, &c.

(2.) The completeness of the results. Effective, deep, and universal changes. Men renovated—society altered. Ignorance banished—crime annihilated—misery extinguished. Purity, joy, and bliss diffused. The days of heaven upon earth.

APPLICATION.

1. Are we the friends or enemies of the blessed Saviour? Do we despise, reject, deride, reproach, &c., or do we hail, receive, and delight in him? All men act now as his friends or foes.

2. Has he sprinkled your hearts with the blessings of his grace—his word—his blood—his Spirit?

3. Are you aiding Christ in his triumphal career? Accelerating the conversion of the world? The soldiers of his cross?

4. What bright visions are yet to distinguish the cause of the Saviour! "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," &c.

THE MORAL BEAUTY OF THE REDEEMER.

"Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee forever."—PSALM xlv. 2.

NONE of the sacred prophets wrote more fully, clearly, or sweetly of the Saviour than Jesse's son, the sweet singer of Israel. He was richly imbued with the spirit of prophecy, and was favored to see, in predicted visions, much of the glory and preciousness of the Messiah. He wrote much of his sorrows and humiliation, but he wrote much, also, of his joy and triumph. Of these, the 74th, and the psalm from which our text is selected, have a distinguished pre-eminence. His soul was greatly elevated, and powerfully excited, when he composed this wondrous psalm, "My heart," &c. The original conveys the idea of his emotions being extremely wrought upon, so that his fervid passions boiled within him. My theme is royal—"I speak of the things," &c.; my subject so copious, so richly overflowing, that my fingers inscribe the celestial strains with vehement rapidity—"My tongue is the pen," &c. The title of the psalm is peculiarly interesting—"A song of loves"—of the pre-eminent love of the King-Messiah to his church, and the reciprocated love of the church to her royal head. Our text is addressed directly to him—"Thou art fairer," &c. Observe, the text refers to the beauty of Christ's person, the graciousness of his address, and the blessedness of his reign.

I. THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST'S PERSON. "Thou art fairer," &c. Beauty has been defined—an assemblage of graces that please the eye. Let us consider this in its application,

1. *To the body of Jesus.* No doubt our first parents, in reference to their bodies, were perfect personifications of all that is lovely and beautiful. Sin has defiled, and polluted, and corrupted the whole man. When we refer to the mystical manner of Christ's conception, and that the body of Christ was free from all taint of human depravity, we may safely conclude that, as the second Adam, he was arrayed in perfect health and beauty. As such, although Christ had all our sinless infirmities, yet his body seems to have been secured from disease, even as his remains were preserved from corruption. How affecting, then, the account which is given of the influence of his griefs and sorrows! See Isaiah lii. 14; so, also, liii. 2, 3, &c. But how different did that countenance appear when transfigured on the Mount, shining brighter than the noonday sun—and when he turned it on his persecutors in the garden—and when the officers fell as dead men at his feet! But, consider the beauty of Christ,

2. *In reference to his mind.* In him dwelt all the depths of wisdom and knowledge. The whole universe, in all its vastness and glory, was open and transparent before him. All the grandeur of the celestial temple was familiar to him. He knew all that the angels knew, or felt, or desired. He knew the mind and heart of Jehovah. No one knew the Father but the Son. How infinite his knowledge! How perfectly glorious his mind! We consider this beauty,

3. *In reference to the moral, or holy nature of Christ.* In this he was abstract purity—humanity in a glorious state of entire perfection. No weakness, no error; guile was not found in his lips. Holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners—"Fairer than the children of men." Moses, in all these respects, was fair and distinguished; but a greater than Moses is here. One is the servant, the other the Son and Lord. David was justly celebrated as the ruddy son of

Jesse, and how great his intellectual and moral attainments; but here is David's Lord and Saviour, the one a sweet star of the Jewish night, the other the bright orb of gospel day. Solomon, for the fame of his wisdom and glory, stands out in the pages of revelation; but Jesus is infinitely wiser, and greater, and more glorious than Solomon. Daniel was a person of peculiar knowledge, and beauty, and goodness; but his highest honor was to be one of the train of prophets who testified of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Could we abstract all the excellencies of holy men and prophets, and concentrate the whole as in one focus, we should not have a millionth part of the beauty and glory of the blessed Messiah. In the highest possible sense, he was fairer than the sons of men—the fairest among ten thousand, &c. Let us consider,

II. The gracefulness of his address. "Grace is poured," &c. For his great mediatorial work, Jesus was anointed with the oil of gladness. The Holy Ghost rested on him in all his unbroken plenitude—"Not given by measure," &c. The result of this grace, as poured into his lips, is described by John—"He was full of grace and truth." Now this was true, both as to matter and manner. Listen to the matter: I go to the beginning of his ministry, Luke iv. 16; see also John vii. 37. Look also at his manner. How he influences the woman of Samaria! She forgets her water-pot, &c. How he attracts and softens the officers—"Never man," &c. How he draws forth the eulogium of Nicodemus—"We know that thou art a Teacher," &c. How he melts the heart of the woman who was a sinner—how he discourses with the sisters of Bethany—how he delights the multitudes of the illiterate with his charming goodness, and interesting parables, so that the common people, &c.—how the eye of sorrow looked to him—how the ear blessed him—how the people exclaimed in rapturous songs, "Hosanna, Blessed is he," &c.

III. The blessedness of his reign. "Therefore God hath blessed thee," &c. He ever enjoyed the delight and supreme love of the Father. God testifies to this during his ministry on earth. He displayed this in raising him from the dead, &c.; see Phil. ii. 6, &c. He hath constituted him Lord and Christ—given him the honor of angels, and adoration of all the redeemed in glory. Look at the splendid vision of the apocalypse, Rev. vii. 9.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the supreme excellency of Jesus Christ.

2. How is he in the estimation of your hearts, thoughts, conversation, &c.?

3. The great end of the ministry and church is to exhibit and exalt the Saviour.

4. We proclaim this Saviour to all now present.

THE MIGHTY SAVIOUR.

"Mighty to save."—Isaiah lxiii. 1.

Expositors have expressed some difficulty in giving a full, clear, and harmonious explication of this splendid portion of Isaiah's prophecy. Some have fancied there was a reference to Cyrus, whom God raised up to be the scourge of Israel's enemies; others have thought that it refers to the victories of Judas Maccabeus; but a careful examination of the whole paragraph must necessarily limit it to the Messiah. To no other is the language applicable, especially verses 4 and 5. Then, if it refers to Jesus, it has been disputed as to whether it refers to his passion and conflict with the rulers of this world, and the powers of darkness, or to the conquests he should obtain in the latter days, in the overthrow of unbelieving and impenitent nations. The whole passage seems best to apply to the Saviour's conquests over our spiritual enemies, when, by his sufferings and death, he redeemed us to God, and vanquished our hellish adversaries, when he uttered those exclamations of victory, "Now is the judgment of this world," &c.; and, especially when he cried with a loud voice, "It is finished," &c. But, whatever may be the design of the prophet, our text evidently belongs to the Saviour, and contains one great and glorious truth, that Jesus, our Redeemer, is "mighty to save." The might or power of Christ to save will appear,

I. In the difficulties he had to surmount. These difficulties had relation,

1. *To the divine character.* God's holy righteous character required the punishment of the guilty. His truth required i

—his government required it—the love and approbation of his holy creatures required it. Deviation from right—connivance at sin—indifference to the government of the universe, would have thrown all creation into confusion.

2. *To the power of our adversaries.* The myriads of hellish hosts had usurped power and authority over the world; had possessed themselves of the heart of man; held him in Satanic thraldom; bound him with chains of darkness, and fetters of rebellion; filled him with hate and treason against God and holiness.

3. *To the depravity of the sinner.* His sin had transformed him into the child of the devil; he became disordered and vile in all his faculties and powers; the crown fallen, the glory gone. "From the crown of the head," &c. Robbed, stripped, half dead, ready to perish, &c. Christ, by his divine might, overcame all these impediments, and removed every difficulty.

(1.) He glorified all the divine perfections in the human nature he assumed. Honored the law, &c.; glorified the government of God.

(2.) He overcame the powers of darkness—asserted the supremacy—caused them to fear, and tremble, and fly—bruised the head of the devil.

(3.) He opened the fountain for the dying sinner—a healing fountain of life and mercy:—

> "The dying thief rejoiced to see
> That fountain in his day;
> And there may I, though foul as he,
> Wash all my sins away."

Christ so controlled events, as to make it righteous and merciful for God to save, &c. Levelled every mountain, exalted every valley, made crooked things straight, &c. When these difficulties are considered in all their formidable character—difficulties which all the angels in heaven could not have removed—it will be clear that Christ is "mighty to save."

II. IN THE COUNTLESS MULTITUDES OF THOSE HE REDEEMED. To save one from extreme peril, from the most imminent danger, would have been great; but Jesus redeemed a world. All the past ages were interested prospectively in his mission and death—all at the period when he lived—all the future ages, even from the first man to the last of woman born, of all ages, countries, climes, and tongues. "This we know and testify," &c. Think of being surety for untold millions—bearing the guilt of the world—having accounted to him the iniquity of us all. A soul, enduring its own guilt, sinks into the black abyss, and descends lower and lower to all eternity. Now, he took the transgressions of the whole species, &c.; and, in bearing the huge mountain of our world's sins, he proved that he was "mighty to save."

III. IN THE DEPTHS OF MISERY FROM WHICH HE RESCUED, AND THE HEIGHTS OF FELICITY TO WHICH HE ELEVATES, THE SUBJECTS OF HIS GRACE. To ascertain the extent of these we must know something of the wretchedness of the sinner's state—something of the pain, shame, remorse, fear, &c.; of the anguish of the sinner's death-bed; of the horrors which burst on them in the eternal world; the dreadful crisis of appearing before the bar of Deity—the fearful sentence—the eternal doom—those shades of night—those scenes of despair and agony. Then contrast this with the eternal glory of the beatified, the scenes of paradisaical blessedness, the throne, the crown, the robe, the vision, the rapture, the overflowing joy, the endless blessedness, &c. In this we especially discern the mightiness of Christ to save. It is seen,

IV. IN THE VARIETY OF CHARACTER DELIVERED AND EXALTED BY HIS SAVING GRACE. It is always a mighty work to convert, even where there is morality, amiability, &c.—even where there is education, and the impress of good example, &c.; but how much greater does it appear, where there is the most palpable ignorance, the most disgusting grossness, the most inveterate enmity, the most hardened unbelief. Look at the sneering skeptic; look at the superstitious pagan; look at the abandoned profligate; yet myriads of these he has saved. He can deliver from the most reckless and extreme state of depravity—Manasseh; the woman that was a sinner; the thief on the cross; Saul, &c.; myriads of idolatrous heathens, &c.; what have we not seen, &c.

V. IN THE INSTRUMENTALITY HE EMPLOYS. By the suspension of the laws of the universe; by angelic instrumentality, &c., we might expect great results. But he works by moral power—moral influence in the word—the power of truth and love—by the all-influential energy of compassion—he draws, allures, &c. Look at the

gospel; behold the ministry, &c. These are the agency, &c. Things apparently foolish and weak, &c.; yet in his hands mighty, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Our subject is full of hope to the lost and despairing.* Christ is mighty to save, &c.

2. *Consolation to the Christian.* Mighty to keep and preserve, &c. How necessary and essential this.

3. *Terror to the impenitent.* He is mighty to destroy. How terrific the great day of his wrath, &c. "How shall we escape," &c.

EZEKIEL'S VISION OF CHRIST.

"And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw," &c.—EZEK. i. 26, &c.

No man hath seen God at any time. Yet the glory of the Lord has often been displayed to the children of men. It was manifested to Moses and the elders of Israel, Exod. xxiv. 9. "Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet as it were a paved work, a sapphire stone, and as it were a body of heaven in its clearness." It was seen also for the space of forty years in the pillar of cloud and fire, &c. It was seen resting over the mercy-seat in the tabernacle, and at the dedication of the temple the smoke of the presence of the Lord filled the house. It was seen also by Isaiah, in his resplendent vision of the celestial temple, when he saw the Lord high and lifted up, and whose train filled the heavenly place. The visions of John in Patmos, often embraced exhibitions of the divine magnificence and glory. None however of the revealed displays of God's glory surpass that with which Ezekiel was favored, and which we have read as our text. Let us consider,

I. THE GLORIOUS PERSON WHICH THIS VISION REVEALS.

II. THE RESPLENDENT THRONE ON WHICH HE SITS. And,

III. THE GRACIOUS PRINCIPLES ON WHICH HIS GOVERNMENT IS ADMINISTERED.

I. THE GLORIOUS PERSON WHICH THE VISION REVEALS. The description given embraces three things.

1. *His likeness to humanity*, ver. 26. It is clear it was a vision of the anointed Messiah. Most of the manifestations of God's glory assumed this form. When God appeared to Abraham, there were three in the likeness of men, but one of them is styled the Lord, and reveals the purposes of his wrath. To Jacob, and wrestled with him in the fashion of a man, "but he had power with God." To Joshua over against Jericho with his sword drawn, &c. He was captain of the Lord's host, and Joshua worshipped him. To Isaiah in the vision we have referred to. For the evangelist quoting it, says, "These things spake Esaias when he saw his glory." So now Ezekiel when he beheld the glory of Jehovah describes it as the appearance of a man. But with the aspect of humanity, notice,

2. *His peculiar magnificence and glory* Ver. 27. Light and fire have ever been the chief emblems of Deity. He is the Father of lights, &c. The Lord God is a sun, &c. These might denote his knowledge—purity—justice. His character is transparent holiness. Mark,

3. *His likeness to Jehovah's glory.* Ver. 28. "The likeness of the glory of the Lord." How harmonious this vision with the records of revelation as to the divine glory of Christ! Hear the apostle, "We beheld his glory, &c. "Who was the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Hearken to Jesus when he replied to Philip, "Show us the Father," &c. "Whoso hath seen me, hath seen the Father." How dim the vision of those who read these things, and see nothing in Jesus but the man, the creature! How frigid and poor the doctrine which places him on a level with prophets, &c.! How insipid the gospel of which he is not the sun and glory! But how suitable this revelation to our state as sinners! The Saviour is God, Jehovah's fellow. How great, glorious, all-sufficient! Here we can trust, and build, &c. But are we not alarmed? Can we see his face and live? Yes, for his was the likeness of a man, "God with us." God in our flesh. God our kinsman and redeemer. Notice,

II. THE RESPLENDENT THRONE ON WHICH HE SITS. Here our words must be few and carefully uttered. Observe,

1. *The position of the throne.* Beneath were seraphim and cherubim, &c. But above the firmament, &c. Having supremacy—the pre-eminence, &c. Our immortal poet has finely paraphrased it—

> "Eternal power, whose high abode
> Becomes the grandeur of a God;
> Infinite lengths beyond the bounds
> Where stars revolve their little rounds.
>
> The lowest step above thy feet,
> Rises too high for Gabriel's seat;
> In vain the tall archangel tries
> To reach the height with wond'ring eyes."

Notice,

2. *The magnificent appearance of the throne.* Ver 27. Here we have the symbols of grandeur and majesty, indicating by such figures the glory of the divine government. Also the equity and purity of his administration. He reigns in righteousness and in truth. "Justice and judgment," &c. Besides, with him all is transparent, no confusion, no darkness. The whole, too, is mellowed down by the appearance of amber and the sapphire stone. Goodness reigns throughout. Love sways the eternal sceptre. Only terrible to the incorrigibly guilty, but of tenderest pity to them who love him. We proceed to notice,

III. THE GRACIOUS PRINCIPLES ON WHICH HIS GOVERNMENT IS ADMINISTERED. We mean his moral government in connection with our race, ver. 28. Read a parallel representation, Rev. iv. 3. The first refers to the rainbow—destruction of the old world. Guilt—wrath—destruction—world swept away, &c. Terror and dread would agitate the sons of men, &c. The appearance of a cloud would inspire with alarm, be ominous of peril. God therefore thus covenanted with Noah, Gen. ix. 11, &c. How beautifully applicable to the gracious administration of God in our guilty world! Sin had exposed to vengeance. Judgment might have visited. God might have taken his bow of justice and his arrows of wrath. But mercy triumphs. Grace superabounds. Love prevails. He unstrings the bow, turns it upward. No arrow is seen. It becomes the emblem of reconciliation. It spans the whole heavens. Embraces the whole world, and is suspended in the gospel as the symbol of peace and mercy. It is irradiated with all the perfections of Deity. "Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace," &c. It is over the throne of Deity, and from it arises a voice as the sound of many waters. Shall we not hearken to it, "As I live, saith the Lord God," &c. "God so loved the world," &c. "For he sent not his Son," &c. Beneath are myriads of spirits clothed in white robes. Hark! they sing in loud accents, "honor, and glory, and power, and riches and wisdom, be unto the Lamb," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *What elevated conceptions we should have of Jesus!* The most high God demands supreme worship and honor for him, yea, the reverence and obedience of the whole creation. Honor equal to his own, &c.

2. *The subject is full of encouragement to the contrite sinner.* This is the age and dispensation of mercy. You may see God in Christ and not die, yea, approach and live. "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace," &c.

3. *Our subject is full of terror to the incorrigible sinner.* The mediatorial reign of mercy will end. The bow will be strung again. The quiver will furnish arrows of ruin. God will arise, and then wo, wo, wo, to his enemies. Then how terrific the appearance of the Lamb. "Then will they cry to the hills," &c. "For the great day of his wrath," &c. Oh! then kiss the Son before he is angry, &c.

> "Flee to the refuge of his cross,
> And seek salvation there."

And do so now, this night. For, behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

THE BENEVOLENT MISSION OF CHRIST.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."—JOHN iii. 17.

OF all the discourses delivered by the great Teacher, none exceed in interest and true importance the one which he addressed to Nicodemus, a ruler among the Jews. In the first part, Christ insists on the doctrine of regeneration, or that entire change of heart and life by which a man becomes a new creature, &c. He then expatiates

on the grand truths of redemption; refers for an analogy to the brazen serpent in the wilderness; and then utters that grand condensed epitome of the gospel, "God so loved the world," &c. Then follows the text, "For God sent not his Son," &c. The text contains two great declarations.

I. IT DECLARES THAT FOR WHICH GOD DID NOT SEND HIS SON, &c. The eternal Jehovah is described as the great source of this amazing transaction—Jesus, the Son of God, as the blessed agent employed to execute his gracious designs—the world the place of his embassy, the theatre of his mighty undertaking. That embassy was not one of wrath but mercy. Observe, the world was in a state deserving condemnation. God could have found ten thousand reasons of condemnation. For its wilful ignorance, they had sought darkness and loved it—for its horrid superstitions—for its gross idolatries—for its awful blasphemies—for its insatiable cruelty—for its avowed rebellion—even the most enlightened part of the world, the favored land of Judea. What causes for condemnation here! Their perversion of truth—their rejection of prophets—their wide-spread hypocrisy—their natural ingratitude and apostacy—their covetousness and oppression. All these were dark spots, offensive to Deity, incurring his wrath, &c. Yet, he did not send his Son to condemn, &c.; that is, not as a minister of terror and judgment. In one sense he did condemn—by his holy, spotless life—by his pure and benevolent ministry. But the grand intention is exhibited,

II. IN THE OTHER DECLARATION OF THE TEXT, "BUT THAT THE WORLD," &c.

1. *Might be saved from ignorance and error by his teaching.* He came to bring "life and immortality to light," &c.—to overthrow every false system in the world, whether pagan, or the heresies of the Jews. By propounding the way of life fully, perfectly, yet simply, he left the way to heaven so clear and plain, that a wayfaring man, &c. Hence the common people heard him gladly.

2. *Might be saved from false teachers and models by his life.* There were many teaching philosophy in the celebrated cities of Greece; various sects among the Jews, Pharisees, and Sadducees, &c.; not in the whole, one who was worthy of exact and universal imitation. Even the godly among the Jews were frail and imperfect in their lives. He sent his Son, the perfect portrait of his own glory—the perfect mode of his own perfections—every virtue, every grace. His holiness was both internal and external. It was complete, lacking nothing. It had no dross, no weakness, no infirmity. As clear as light, as majestic as the sun in the firmament. He could say in all things, "Follow me."

3. *Might be saved from the guilt and effects of sin by his death.* Sin and divine punishment are essentially wedded together—the soul that sinneth shall die. "Cursed is every one," &c. Reverse the decree, and the justice and holiness of God are sacrificed; execute it, and the world perishes. But God sent his Son to be the Redeemer, to pay a price equal to the claims of eternal holiness and truth. It was the punishment of sin in Christ; the voluntary victim, the propitiation. He stood in the fearful gap—he took the culprit's place—he bore the punishment in his own body on the tree. Now sin is punished—now God is glorified—and now the world, through him, may be saved. I cannot refrain from quoting a sentence from a work to which we do not often refer for theological illustration, but where this subject is most sublimely explained in one sentence. The immortal Shakspeare says:—

> "For all the souls that were, were forfeit once,
> And he that might the 'vantage best have took,
> Found out the remedy."

In the language of the apostle, "For while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly."

4. *Might be saved from the power and influence of evil, by the communication of his Spirit and grace.* Atonement is made—a way of safety is revealed. But men must know of it—be invited; for this, there is the gospel of his grace. Before his ascension he said, "All power," &c.; "Go ye therefore, and preach the gospel," &c. But the mind must be renewed—a new heart given—the sanctification of the soul effected. "He, therefore, ascended on high, &c. to receive gifts," &c.; "His Holy Spirit," &c.

5. *Might be saved at death, by their reception into the kingdom and glory of God.* The righteous are blessed in their death, by an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ being administered unto them. To die is their everlasting

gain. They are with Christ, which is far better. Christ receives them to himself, &c.

6. *Might be saved by a glorious resurrection, and blissful coronation at the last day.* The day of perfect redemption is future. Christ will come again, without a sin-offering; when he shall appear, we shall be like him, &c. "He shall change these vile bodies," &c. Place his people at his right hand, and give them the crown of glory, &c. "When the chief Shepherd shall appear," &c. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," &c. Now, all this is included in the great design of Christ coming into our world. There is one part of the text truly important, "Through him;" that is, Christ. He is the Mediator in and through the whole. Every step in the scale of salvation as it rises higher and higher, it is through him. Saved from ignorance, guilt, depravity; saved at death, and forever, through Christ, and through Christ only. The next verse shows us the connecting link between our souls and Christ—"He that believeth;" that giveth his whole heart and soul to receive Christ, trust Christ, and obey Christ; who becomes his disciple—follower. Unbelief puts Christ from, rejects him—says, "away with him, we will not have him to reign," &c. Let us have the world, riches, honors, pleasures, &c. Sinners render null and void, with respect to themselves, the great designs of God's love, and Christ's sacrifice.

APPLICATION.

1. Contemplate the privileges and blessings of redemption.
2. Avail yourselves of them.
3. Despisers must perish.

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

"But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be a ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."—MICAH v. 2.

THE prophet Micah was contemporary with Isaiah, and delivered his predictions during the reign of three of the kings of Judah. His prophecies, like those of Isaiah, had especial respect to the kingdom and glory of the Saviour. That which we have selected for this occasion is an express prophecy as to Christ's incarnation, and it points us to the very place of his nativity. How unlike this to the predictions of the heathen oracles, where the sayings of these imaginary deities were so dark and ambiguous, that they admitted of almost every kind of interpretation! Our text, observe, marks distinctly the place; and, as there were two Bethlehems in Judea, it gives the particular designation by which that town was called in which the world's Redeemer should appear. The signification of the name is interesting: Bethlehem signifies the house of bread. How applicable to Christ, who was the true bread of life, sent to a wretched and perishing world. Let us consider,

I. THE INTIMATIONS OF THE TEXT AS TO THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF THE REDEEMER.

II. THE PLACE OF HIS ADVENT.

III. THE GREAT END OF HIS APPEARANCE Observe,

I. THE INTIMATIONS OF THE TEXT AS TO THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF THE REDEEMER. Notice the last clause of the text; the person who should come forth out of Bethlehem is thus described. It seems to be parallel in sense with that sublime passage in the psalm of Moses, Psalm xc. 2—"Even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." It is in harmony with that striking paragraph in Prov. viii. 22, and is precisely of the same import with the doctrine, John i. 1. It is the same in spirit, too, with the declaration of Jesus, "Before Abraham was, I am." It evidently invests Jesus with the attribute of eternity. No one is from everlasting but God; but the text implicitly states this of Christ; then the fair inference is, that Christ is not only the child born, but the mighty God, &c. "His goings forth," &c. A learned critic says, this form of speech is applied to that which proceeds from the mouth. Jesus is styled, "The Word of God." He went forth, bringing the whole hierarchy of heaven into being; he went forth creating our world; and he went forth communing with our first parents in the garden. He went forth for the inquisition of blood, when Abel, the first martyr, was slain by the fratricide Cain; he went forth in the covenant which he established with Noah; he went forth in the vision with which Abraham and Jacob were favored; he went forth to the rescue of the hundreds and thousands of his oppressed ones in Egypt;

he went forth in the barren wilderness, in the pillar and cloud, &c.; he went forth filling Solomon's consecrated temple with his glory. In all the arrangements of his providence he went forth, &c. Observe,

II. The place of his advent. "Bethlehem Ephratah." Bethlehem was a small town, six miles southwest of Jerusalem, greatly distinguished for its picturesque situation, and the fertility of its soil. Ephratah signifies fertility. Bethlehem belonged to the tribe of Judah, of whose tribe Christ was. Here we are reminded of Jacob's prophecy, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah," &c. In this Bethlehem was Christ to be born—the most important event connected with this or any other spot in our world. Bethlehem had often been distinguished before. Here, 1700 years previously, had a tomb been erected over the remains of Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, and mother of Joseph. Here Naomi was born; and to this place Ruth returned with her, who bare Obed, the grandfather of David. This was the birthplace of the son of Jesse, the sweet singer of Israel; so that Christ was not only the offspring of David, but born in David's city. But the glory of Bethlehem was this: that here was to be first manifested the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, who came especially to destroy the works of the devil. Mark how the providence of God secured the fulfilment of prophecy. Mary and Joseph dwelt at Nazareth. Nazareth was quite in another part of Palestine from Bethlehem, &c. At this time, Augustus Cæsar issued a decree for the taxing the Roman empire, to which Palestine was now tributary. This was not a money-tax, but an enrolment of the name and condition of life. Joseph, therefore, went, &c., Luke ii. 1, &c. Had not this taxing taken place, or earlier or later; had not this been Joseph's city, &c., the whole would have been apparently frustrated. But thus it was written, &c. His coming forth at his nativity was with mingled circumstances of humiliation and greatness, of meanness and glory. Look at the parents—the place—dwelling, &c. How lowly, &c. Hearken to the angels—see the star—visit Christ with the Egyptian sages—and how great, magnificent, and glorious. Such was his birth, and such, extensively, was to be the character of his life and mission. But notice,

III. The great end of his appearance, as specified in the text. There were many ends to be accomplished, but the text refers to the character he was to sustain. He was to be ruler in Israel—to be invested with power, dignity, regal authority, &c. He came to be both a Prince and a Saviour. Hearken to his reply to Pilate before his death, John xviii. 33, &c. This is the key to this part of the text. Christ's dominion is in the souls of men. It is entirely spiritual; it extends to the whole church, which he hath redeemed; it shall endure forever. Believers are the subjects—the scriptures the statute-books, &c. His is a rule of righteousness and purity—of goodness and mercy—grace and tenderness—love and salvation.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the glory of Christ's nature.* The blessed Son of God. Whose goings forth, &c.

2. *The great design of his advent.* To rule—to set up an empire. He rules all whom he saves.

3. *Are we his subjects, &c.?* Is he born into our hearts? Does he sway his sceptre of grace over us, &c.?

4. *He will destroy all whom he does not rule.*

CHRIST'S ADVENT IN THE FLESH.

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."—Gal. iv. 4, 5.

One of the great mysteries of our religion is the advent of the Saviour into our world. The apostle with all his learning, gifts, and inspired powers of mind, exclaimed, "Great is the mystery of godliness," &c. This illustrious event had long been predicted and promised: the earliest intimation of divine mercy referred to it, "The seed of the woman," &c. Jacob in his blessing on Judah's tribe had recorded, "The sceptre shall not," &c. Isaiah had introduced it with an exclamation of wonder, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive," &c.; and anticipating it, he bursts forth, "Unto us a child is born," &c. Ages after ages rolled on, until at length, over the favored plains of Bethlehem angels hov

creed, and sung to the shepherds, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, Christ the Lord." Our text refers to that day, and the great event connected with it. Observe, the person sent—the period specified—the mission contemplated.

I. THE PERSON SENT. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."

1. *The person was the Son of God.* Angels are sons of God, so are all saints, but Christ is the only begotten of the Father. The sonship of the Redeemer has involved a controversy which commenced very early in the Christian era, and is not yet terminated. The doctrine clearly teaches the pre-existence of Christ. He was sent by and from the Father; he came down from heaven; he had glory with the Father before, &c. It is also evident that Christ essentially partakes of the nature of Deity; that he is really divine, of one essence and glory with the Father—the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; "that he thought it not robbery," &c.; that "he is over all, God blessed forever," &c. But the Son of God was sent,

2. *Enshrined in our nature.* The divine glory had dwelt in the ancient tabernacle and temple, but now it became embodied—clothed with our humanity—allied by a most inexplicable union to our nature. Hence the peculiar phraseology of the text, "made of a woman," not born in the usual way, of a woman, but "made," "the seed of the woman." "A virgin shall conceive." Let us just read the inspired account, Luke i. 35. Woman, the first in the transgression, is thus signally honored in the divine conception of the world's Redeemer. Thus, too, the conception of Christ was holy, so that he was perfectly free from all moral defilement and human depravity.

3. *He was subject to the divine law.* "Made under the law."

(1.) As a man he was under the moral law; bound by those precepts of pure equity which are righteous, just, and good.

(2.) As a Jew, he was under the Levitical law, and bound to observe its rites, and offerings, and sacrifices.

(3.) As a surety for man he was obnoxious to the curse of the broken law, and exposed to all its inflictions of wrath. He was born under these, and lived to fulfil these, and thus became a curse for us, although actually he knew no sin. As to the appearance of the Son of God, notice,

II. THE PERIOD SPECIFIED. "In the fulness of the time."

1. *At the time selected in the exercise of God's infinite wisdom.* All times and seasons were his; he knew, therefore, the best and most fitting period for the manifestation of his Son to take place.

2. *At the time predicted in the oracles of truth.* Observe the celebrated prophecy of Jacob, "The sceptre shall not depart," &c., Gen. xlix. 10. Now just at the time of Christ's appearance the civil power and authority of the Jews were usurped by the Romans; they became subject to that great monarchy, and had not the power of putting criminals to death. So also, Daniel had declared that seventy weeks were determined, &c., Dan. ix. 24. So also in Haggai, "The glory of the latter house," &c. Now in that, Christ taught, wrought miracles, &c., and forty years afterwards it was destroyed.

3. *At the most appropriate period, for giving prominence to the Saviour's advent, to the nations of the world in general.*

No other period so well adapted. Not before the flood—not in the patriarchal ages—not during the period of the barbarism which generally prevailed, except in Judea—not during the conflicts of the four great monarchies, but in the learned Augustan age; when the world was at peace—when the evidences of Christianity could be examined by the learned of all countries—when the apostolic Jews could go forth through the known world, &c.—when the world had been prepared by the predictions, the rites, and ceremonies of the Jews, and by the general expectation which seemed universally to prevail—when all other systems had failed to make men wise, and holy, and happy. Observe in reference to the advent of Christ,

III. THE MISSION CONTEMPLATED.

1. "*To redeem,*" &c. Enlargement here is impossible. Allow me to cite a few passages from the records of holy writ. "The Son of man came to seek," &c. "God so loved the world," &c. "This is a faithful saying," &c. He came and "bore our sins in his own body," &c. "Suffered, the just," &c.

2. *To exalt us to an adopted sonship.* By sin, we were outcasts, &c. Aliens under wrath, but being redeemed, we may return

to God, and become his children, "heirs of God and joint-heirs," &c. By a believing reception of the Lord Jesus Christ, John i. 12.

APPLICATION.

1. Are we personally interested in the blessed advent of Christ?

2. Have we realized the blessing of adoption?

3 Are we looking for his second coming?

MANHOOD OF CHRIST

"That just man."—MATTHEW xxvii. 19.

NOTHING is more self-evident from the scriptures than the manhood of the Redeemer. It is explicitly stated by the apostle, that God sent his own Son into the world, made of a woman, made under the law, &c. Hence also he often spake of himself as a man, and as the Son of man. As such his birth, and life, and death, and resurrection, are all matters of inspired narrative. Let us then consider the nature, the peculiar characteristics, and the importance of the humanity of the Redeemer.

I. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S MANHOOD. We observe,

1. *That he was not a man after the ordinary generation of human beings.* He was only the Son of man as his virgin mother was one of the descendants of Adam. Hence his conception took place before the marriage of Joseph and Mary, and was produced by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. Thus was fulfilled the prediction of Isaiah, that a virgin should conceive, &c. Thus also the emphasis that is laid on Christ being the "seed of the woman." "Made of a woman," &c.

2. *Yet he was a man in the fullest sense of the term.* He was truly human. Had our entire nature. Bone of our bone. Our real brother. Had both the corporeal and spiritual parts of our nature. Not merely like unto, or in the appearance, but in deed and in truth. "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren," Heb. ii. 1, &c.

3. *As a man he went through the various stages of life, and had the infirmities of manhood.* He was born an infant. Passed hrough childhood. Is presented to us in his youth. Arrived at maturity of years. As a man he was hungry and thirsty, he was weary; as a man he was dejected and sorrowful; as a man he feared, &c.; as a man he could be troubled, and tempted, and perplexed, &c. "Touched with the feeling of our infirmities," &c. Heb. iv. 15. As a man he could die and yield up the ghost.

II. NOTICE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR REDEEMER'S MANHOOD.

1. *He was a holy and just man.* In reference to the conception it is written, "therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee," &c. Luke i. 35. His whole life was pure and unblamable. No fault was found in him by Pilate, and the revelation to him by his wife was, that Christ was a just man. He had neither original depravity nor practical sin, even guile was not found in his mouth. "Holy, harmless, and separate from sinners." In him God ever beheld his own holiness and truth reflected.

2. *He was a poor and humble man.* Look at his immediate parentage, his reputed father and real mother. His first dwelling a stable, his cradle a manger. His astonishing exclamation, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests," &c. He became "poor," how poor the tongue cannot express. A servant of servants. His tomb was the property of another, &c.

3. *He was a suffering man.* "A man of sorrows," &c. Grief was his portion through life. He came to mourn and suffer, to agonize and die. His sufferings were predicted; they are minutely detailed, and no griefs were ever like unto his. He came expressly to suffer, &c. Consider,

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST. It was thus,

1. *That he became our kinsman and our brother.* It was necessary that he should know our sinless infirmities. That he should have all the feelings of our nature, and be really and truly man with us, as he was divinely God with God.

2. *Thus he became subject to the divine law.* The law was made for human beings, it behooved Christ therefore to be human that he might be liable to its claims, and thus honor all its holy and righteous requisitions. Hence it is written he was made "under the law."

3. *That he might present himself a sacrifice for sin.* It was the guilt of human

nature that had to be expiated. It was necessary therefore for the surety and sacrifice to have our nature. Christ thus could meet its demands, and endure its righteous inflictions. Thus he could "redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13.

4. *That he might exalt human nature, by introducing it into the holiest of all.* See Heb. ii. 17, iv. 14, ix. 20.

APPLICATION.

Let us,

1. *Contemplate human nature.* In its original excellent state. Debased and accursed by sin. Exalted in the manhood of Jesus. And through his death, redeemed and glorified in heaven.

2. *Learn the nearness of Christ to us.* Our brother. The Messiah is our kinsman. We need not then be overwhelmed with fear, or shrink with horror. We may approach and speak to him.

3. *The claims he has on our love, gratitude, and obedience.* Should we not love him when he hath so much loved us, &c. "We are not our own," &c.

EARLY LIFE OF CHRIST.

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him."—LUKE ii. 40.

OUR text contains the sum of what is related of Christ from his being presented in the temple, to his attaining the age of twelve years. The records of the gospel chiefly refer to his public life and ministry, the work which he came especially to do. The text refers us to four things in the early life of Christ; these we shall briefly notice, and then observe his subsequent history, to the period of his baptism. Observe,

I. THE FOUR THINGS THE TEXT RECORDS OF THE EARLY HISTORY OF JESUS. We are referred,

1. *To his physical growth.* "The child grew." Increased in physical power. It is not improbable that Christ's body was free from disease, even as his soul was free from pollution. It has also been conjectured that his countenance was remarkable for its dignified benignity. "He was fairer than the children of men." But,

2. *He was distinguished for an increase in mental vigor.* "Waxed strong in spirit." His faculties enlarged and grew in mental power. As a man his mind was as capable of advancement as his body. No doubt all the intellectual powers were possessed by the Saviour in all their perfection.

3. *For the fulness of the spirit of wisdom.* "Filled with wisdom." By observation, reading, meditation, devotion, his mind was filled with true and heavenly wisdom. No doubt this wisdom was peculiarly displayed in his abhorrence of evil, and in his love of holiness.

4. *For the plenitude of the divine favor.* "And the grace of God was upon him." By grace is not meant favor to one unworthy, but complacent delight, and the fullest degree of the divine approbation. Observe how in his subsequent history,

II. THESE FEATURES IN THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST WERE EVINCED. Here too, one short paragraph is all that revelation furnishes. Observe,

1. *His attendance at the holy festival in Jerusalem.* Probably his first visit. "Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord," Exodus xxv. 17; Deut. xvi. 16. The distance from Nazareth was seventy miles. Here was an act of pious obedience to God's ordinances, and one evidence of his attachment to the worship of his heavenly Father.

2. *His conduct in the temple.* How affecting the narrative of the return of his parents, discovering that Christ was not with them! Their return to Jerusalem, their finding him in the temple, but especially the circumstances in which they found him, "sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking questions." Such was the precocity of his mind, the clearness of his understanding, the readiness of his answers, and the solidity of his judgment, that all who heard him were astonished at him.

3. *His solemn reply to the interrogation of his mother.* "Son, why hast thou dealt thus with us? And he said, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Here his responsibility to God his Father, his recognition of that responsibility, his earnest desire to meet it fully and exactly in all its supreme demands, are presented to our view. Learn, the claims of God are above all, and before all others.

4. *His obedient subjection to his parents.* He came with his parents to Nazareth, and was "subject to them." There is no collision of rights between parents and God. Right obedience is rendered to neither except it is to both. In the temple the things of God in all their grandeur and holy majesty weighed down his mind, and absorbed his heart; but in the house of Joseph and Mary, he was docile, mild, attentive, and obedient, studying their peace, and cheerfully doing their will and pleasure. Thus Christ became a pattern, an example of filial piety to the young. There can be no doubt at this time too, that he toiled with his hands, assisting Joseph in the work of a carpenter. Here honest toil and industry were sanctified by the conduct of the world's Redeemer.

5. *Notice the progression of Christ both in stature, wisdom, and favor with God and man,* verse 52. He passed through every stage of childhood, and youth, to manhood. His mind enlarged with his bodily growth —he grew in wisdom daily. Increasing in holy, heavenly knowledge and understanding. His demeanor was so exemplary, that his conduct was admired by those who knew him, and in the favor of the people he grew daily. God also continued to behold his Son, his elect, and precious one, with increased favor and delight. Such was the early life of the blessed Jesus.

APPLICATION.

1. In Christ we have a pattern of early piety. Let this often be pressed upon the attention of the young. How delightful this picture!

2. Here we see the just claims of parents upon their offspring's obedient subjection. This should be cheerful, ready, constant, and sincere.

3. We see the pre-eminent claims of God—"Wist ye not," &c. This is the grand end of life, to serve, and glorify God.

CHRIST'S PROPHETICAL OFFICE.

"For all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."—JOHN xv. 15.

MOSES had predicted, nearly 1500 years before the Saviour's advent, that he should be a Prophet, unto whom God would imperatively demand that the people should hearken. Numerous are the representations also given by the prophets to this office of the Redeemer. Those figures which represent Christ as a star and as a sun, to diffuse light, evidently refer to his prophetical character. All those descriptions of Christ as a teacher, counsellor, messenger, &c. clearly involve the same idea. At the commencement of his ministry, Jesus declared that the Spirit of God was upon him to this end, and for this work. Let us ascertain,

I. WHAT THE PROPHETICAL OFFICE IMPLIED.

II. ITS CHARACTERISTICS, AS DISPLAYED IN THE LIFE OF THE REDEEMER.

I. WHAT THE PROPHETICAL OFFICE IMPLIED. It evidently implied a divine call—a divine commission—and divine qualifications. Thus God called Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Thus he also sent them forth, with express messages from himself. Thus he also qualified them for their important work. Now, Christ in his prophetical office was,

1. *Chosen of the Father.* Hence David says, in reference to the Messiah, "Thou spakest in vision, &c. and saidst, I have exalted One chosen out of the people," Psalm lxxxix. 19. "My servant whom I have chosen," Isaiah xliii. 10. Thus the Jews derided Christ, as the professed "chosen of God," Luke xxiii. 35. Peter describes the Redeemer as a "living stone, chosen of God, and precious." Christ was, therefore, the object of the Father's choice, as our Prophet and Mediator.

2. *He was commissioned of God.* Selected for the work, and in the fulness of the times, "sent forth;" see the beautiful passage in Isaiah, xlii. 1, &c. On his divine commission Jesus ever insisted, and laid great stress. He said, "I am come in my Father's name," &c. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him who sent me." See also John vi. 39, 40.

3. *He was qualified by the plenteous anointing of the Holy Spirit.* Thus, at his baptism the Holy Ghost descended upon him; and hence he also said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach," &c. Luke iv. 18. So also that striking testimony, "For he

whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;" for it pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell. He had the continuous unbroken plenitude of the Spirit dwelling within him. Now this qualification, by the Spirit dwelling in him, included,

(1.) A spirit of unbounded knowledge and wisdom. "In him were hid all the treasures," &c. "He knew what was in man"—he knew all things—he knew the Father and declared him—he knew all concerning heaven and immortality.

(2.) The spirit of prescience, so that he could clearly perceive the future. Hence his numerous predictions respecting Judas, and Peter, and the other disciples; his predictions of his own resurrection—of the destruction of Jerusalem, &c.—of the prosperity of his kingdom—the end of the world, &c.

(3.) Ability to preach and teach—to proclaim God's love, the way of mercy, the remission of sins, &c.—to exhort, entreat, invite, urge, warn, &c.—to illustrate the truth, and apply it to the hearts and consciences of men. Also to teach the true knowledge of the gospel to his disciples—to qualify them for their great work—imparting the knowledge and the power to proclaim among men the unsearchable riches of divine grace.

II. OBSERVE THE PECULIAR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPHETICAL OFFICE, AS DISPLAYED IN THE LIFE OF THE REDEEMER.

1. *Immaculate purity.* "Holy, harmless," &c. Guile was never found in his mouth. The spotless image of God.

2. *Infallible wisdom.* He could not err. His knowledge embraced every theme, and that with the most positive certainty; and this power he possessed at all times. The spirit of prophecy abode within him. Notice.

3. *The completeness of his work.* The revelation of Jesus Christ during his life, by his Spirit on the apostles, and in the sublime manifestations of Patmos, completed the system of revealed truth, and finished the canon of the scriptures. As such,

4. *He will have no successor.* He has furnished the church with the oracles of truth, with the ordinances of religion, with purity of spiritual worship, and with a living ministry, who are the voice of Christ to the people. How great, and glorious, and incomparable is the Prophet of the New Testament dispensation!

APPLICATION.

1. It is our duty and privilege to hear him.

2. To be enrolled with his disciples.

3. To hearken, so as to obey by the power of his grace, and the influences of his Spirit.

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST.

"For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."—MATT. vii. 29.

ONE branch of Christ's prophetical office was to communicate sacred instruction to the people—to preach the doctrines of salvation, and publish the love of his heavenly Father, to a lost and perishing world. With his entrance on his public work, he began to reveal to mankind the tidings of life and immortality. His instructions were imparted both privately to his own disciples, and publicly to the people, who flocked around him to hear his gracious words. He had just delivered his interesting and comprehensive sermon on the Mount, and it is graphically written. "The people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught as one having authority," &c. Let us notice the subjects he taught, and how he taught them.

I. THE SUBJECTS HE TAUGHT. Now, these subjects embraced the whole of doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion.

1. *He taught the doctrines of religion.* The existence, purity, goodness, and mercy of God; his own equality with the Father; the divinity of the Holy Spirit; man's natural depravity and guilt; the utter helplessness of human nature; the necessity of holiness of heart and life. The doctrine of spiritual influence to renew, guide, and keep to eternal life. The certainty of death—the solemnity of judgment—the eternity of heavenly glory, and everlasting punishment of the wicked.

2. *He taught the nature and necessity of experimental religion.* That the seat of religion was the heart—"The kingdom of God is within you," &c. That man must be born again—that the Holy Spirit must dwell in the soul—that the essence of religion is love—love to God, and love to man. That

all forms are utterly worthless without this—and that true religion is progressive, even to eternal life.

3. *He taught the necessity of practical religion.* He stated that obedience was the only evidence of true discipleship—that such as obeyed him were his mother, his sisters, his brethren. He enforced the importance of the law of equity, demanded a pious conversation, and righteous life. He urged heavenly-mindedness, goodness, charity, mercy, &c. "If ye love me," he said, "keep my commandments." But we inquire,

II. How he taught these things.

1. *With beautiful simplicity.* Illustrating the sublime and lofty themes of heaven and eternity by similes and parables. He drew attention to celestial truths, by speaking of leaven, sweeping the house, seeking the straying sheep, sowing seed, fishing, marriage feasts, &c. Hence the multitude, or common people, heard him gladly.

2. *With direct plainness.* Not uncertain or ambiguous, as the responses of the heathen oracles; not full of subtle disquisitions, or metaphysical reasonings, as the Gentile philosophers; not presenting mere conjectural glosses, or rabbinical fables, as many of the Rabbis among the Jews; but he revealed, illustrated, explained, and enforced his instructions in plain and popular language, opening the eyes of the ignorant, and those who were dwelling in the shadow of death. How direct and plain his sermon on the mount!

3. *He was a faithful and earnest teacher.* It was impossible for him to be listless and lukewarm. He ever had a deep impression of the importance of the work pressing upon him—he ever recognised the pleasure of his heavenly Father, and the value of souls. What a searching specimen of fidelity and earnestness in his address to the scribes and Pharisees, in the 23d chapter of Matthew!

4. *He was an affectionate and tender teacher.* His soul ever overflowed with compassion, so that his words were necessarily full of grace and pity. He rejoiced in the mercy of his mission; hence how gladly he proclaimed liberty to the captive, &c.—how tender to the woman who was a sinner—how he compassionated the infirmities of his own disciples! He did not break the bruised reed, &c. Observe his pathetic appeal at the conclusion of his severe address to the hypocritical Pharisees, "O Jerusalem," &c. Matt. xxiii. 37.

5. *He was a diligent and persevering teacher.* It is said, he taught daily in the temple. All places and occasions were alike to him. He made it his meat and drink—he was ever about his Father's business. At the end of his life he could say, "I have finished the work," &c. His powers and his moments were all consecrated to God—"I must work while it is called day," &c.

6. *He embodied all his instructions in his own blessed example.* In him they saw his precepts engraven. His spirit—his conversation—his life—all gave force to the duties he urged. Perfect consistency, absolute holiness, and infinite goodness, were ever manifested in the Preacher, so that he presented an example that they should follow his steps. He urged his counsels by saying, "Follow me." "My sheep hear my voice." I need not say that he never erred—that all he taught was pure truth, the whole truth, and taught in the most perfect manner; and he taught in his own name, and enforced it by his own authority. See this in Matt. v. 28, 32, 34, 39, 44, &c. "I say unto you," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. True Christians are Christ's disciples. They hear him. This is both a duty and a privilege.

2. Whosoever will not hear him must perish. "How shall we escape," &c.

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

"The works that I do bear witness of me."—John v. 36.

So true was the text, that Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, acknowledged that they knew he was a teacher sent from God, for no man could do the miracles Christ did, unless God were with him. Both Moses and the prophets attested the divinity of their calling, by miracles. And thus also Jesus referred the unbelieving Jews to the works he did as bearing unequivocal testimony of him. A miracle has been defined an unusual interposition of providence, a counteraction or suspension of the operations and laws of nature. A genuine m..

cle should also bear the following evidences.

(1.) That it should be palpable to the senses.

(2.) That it should be performed publicly.

(3.) That it should be recorded and made known.

(4.) That such documents should be fairly traceable to the names they bear.

(5.) That the miracle should be connected with some important event or subject of instruction.

(6.) That the witnesses of the miracle should be above suspicion.

(7.) That the witnesses should agree in their testimony.

Now all the miracles of scripture are capable of being thus demonstrated, and especially those of Christ. These tests may be applied to each and every one of them. In reference to Christ's miracles, observe,

I. THEIR VARIETY. Healing by a word or touch all kinds of diseases. Restoring hearing to the deaf—sight to the blind—speech to the dumb—feet to the lame. Removing palsies—fevers—dropsies—impotency—leprosy. Feeding thousands with a few loaves, &c., expelling demons. Stilling the tempest. Raising the dead, &c. Observe,

II. THEIR NUMBER. Not a few, but connected with nearly all his sermons, several at a time. "And whithersoever he entered into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets and besought him, that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment, and as many as touched him were made whole," Mark vi. 56. The miracles of Christ, like his heavenly sayings, are too numberless to be recorded within the compass of the gospel history. With these he began his ministry, and they attested the greatness of the sufferer at his crucifixion. Observe,

III. THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY WERE PERFORMED. In his own name and by his own power. He acknowledged the Father and gave thanks, but exerted his own power, and by his own authority he effected his mighty deeds. To the leper he said, "I will, be thou clean," Matt. viii. 3. To the centurion, "As thou hast believed so be it unto thee," ver. 13. Peter's wife's mother "he touched, and the fever left her," ver. 14. "He rebuked the winds and the sea, and they were still." He said to the demons, Go, and they went out of the man into the swine. To the paralytic, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," Matt. ix. 2. To the blind man he said, "Be it unto you," &c. ver. 29. As the loaves and fishes passed through his hand he multiplied them. To Lazarus he said, "Come forth," thus evincing that he had all power both in heaven and on earth. Observe,

IV. THEIR PUBLICITY. His miracles were not wrought in a corner, not only were his disciples generally present, but often also the multitude. The unbelieving Jews surrounded the tomb of Lazarus. Several thousands partook of the loaves and fishes. The blind man who received his sight was examined by the Jews. Most of the subjects of Christ's healing power were well known. Deception then was impossible. Christ in all his instructions, and conduct, and deeds, was surrounded by light. His miracles were openly performed, and all might hear and know for themselves. His more private miracles had, at least, two or three to bear witness, as in the case of the ruler's daughter, besides the relatives and friends with whom the restored lived, &c. Observe,

V. THEIR BENEVOLENCE AND MERCY. How striking the contrast between the miracles of Christ and some of those of Moses and the prophets! No supernatural fire was called forth to consume his adversaries. No openings of the earth to swallow his enemies. No destructive energy, to make ensamples of the unbelieving Jews. Like himself and the dispensation he came to set up, they were all gracious and merciful. To heal—to restore—to bless—to make happy—to save. Like the beams of the sun they were joyous, bright, and reviving. He never cursed but once, and that a barren fig-tree growing by the way-side, and hence the property of no one. To do good to the bodies and souls of men, to glorify his Father, and to demonstrate his divine mission were the grand designs of all Christ's miracles.

APPLICATION.

1. *Surely Jesus was the Son of God.* Possessing the power and authority of Jehovah.

2. *His mission was certainly divine.* His works clearly evidence this.

3. *His power and willingness to bless and save remain the same.*

4. *Let the miserable and perishing fly to Christ and be saved.*

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

"Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedec."—HEBREWS vii. 21.

IN some particulars, both the priests and high-priests typified the priestly office and work of Christ; but in other particulars, Christ's priesthood was essentially different from theirs, and had been most strikingly typified in the priesthood of Melchizedec. We do not purpose to enter on the controverted points connected with Melchizedec; but wish to notice the priesthood of Christ in its general aspect, and then to consider it in its peculiar character after the order of Melchizedec. Notice,

I. THE GENERAL ASPECT OF THE PRIESTHOOD IN CHRIST. Observe,

1. *His divine appointment.* No man took that honor upon himself. To this office Christ was destined, and appointed directly by the Father, Heb. v. 4, &c.

2. *His solemn designation.* The priests of old were set apart by water and oil, with various significant rites and offerings—Jesus by his baptism, by the descent of the Holy Ghost, and his own prayer.

3. *The office of the Priest involved various duties.*

(1.) The revelation of the mind of God—the explaining of the Urim and Thummim, and the ordinary communications of the divine will. Christ revealed the divine character, perfections, will, and glory, in the most full and resplendent manner—with noontide light and meridian splendor, yet with clearness, distinctness, and simplicity.

(2.) The instruction of the people. The priests' lips kept knowledge, and the people sought instruction from their mouths; but both of these features were especially associated with Christ's prophetical office.

(3.) The offering of sacrifices to God. Now Jesus appeared to present the last great, effectual sacrifice of himself—his own blood. See Heb. ix. 9–14, x. 6–12, &c.

(4.) Intercession, and blessing the congregation, Heb. ix. 24. "If any man sin, we have an advocate," &c. "Who ever liveth," &c. He is exalted to bless men by turning them away from their iniquities, &c., and by the rich impartation of the Holy Spirit—"He hath received gifts for men," &c. Now, for the discharge of these holy duties great were the qualifications of the Redeemer: unspotted purity—boundless knowledge—treasures of wisdom—and riches of mercy and grace. He was the delight of Jehovah—the Lord of angels—the brother of mankind—and the Priest of the universe! Consider,

II. CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD IN ITS PECULIAR CHARACTER, "AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEC." Now it was so,

1. *In the dignity of his character.* The Son of God, the Prince of the kings of the earth, typified by the kingly character of Melchizedec, "King of Salem," &c.—of greater glory than Aaron and his sons.

2. *In having no predecessor or successor in his office.* See Heb. vii. 1, &c. Thus Jesus came forth, not of the tribe of Levi but of Judah, and according to the oath of Deity, that he should be a Priest forever, &c. Heb. vii. 21. Jesus also abideth a Priest, not being made after a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. In reference to the priests of Aaron they were many, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but Jesus continueth forever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood, Heb. vii. 23, 24.

3. *In the union of the regal with the priestly office.* Priest of the most high God, and yet truly, "King of righteousness." It had been predicted by Zechariah, chap. vi. 13, that he "should be a Priest upon his throne;" his, is therefore a royal priesthood.

4. *In the virtue and extent of his sacrifice.* The Levitical priesthood was limited to the tabernacle of Israel. They also presented numerous victims, the blood of which had no intrinsic merit in procuring remission of sin, or in purifying the worshipper; but Christ's sacrifice embraced, in its extent of merit, all ages, &c.—the whole race of mankind. "He, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man;" "And by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified," Heb. x. 14.

5. *In the exalted station in which his priestly services are continued.* He has not entered into the holiest place of the earthly

temple with the blood of bulls or of goats, but into the heaven of heavens, the holiest of all, where he has sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, and where he ever liveth to make intercession for us.

REMARKS.

1. *Christ is now the only true and living Priest.* There is a sense in which men are priests; but it is only in such a manner as comprehends within its range the whole family of God. Believers are kings and priests unto God.

2. *There is only one great sacrifice.* The Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world. Oh! behold him, and live. Come to this offering, and obtain remission of sins.

3. *There is only one intercessor.* Jesus is the one perpetual advocate, and only Saviour; but able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by him, &c. Heb. vii. 25.

THE ROYAL CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

"A King shall reign and prosper."—JER. xxiii. 5.

AMONG the offices and works of Christ it was clearly and fully predicted that he should be endowed with regal dignity, and that the government should be upon his shoulders. Hence he is often styled governor, ruler, and prince, in the Jewish prophets; one of these exclaims, "Behold thy king cometh unto thee, he is just," &c. Jer. ix. 9. And in the text, "A king shall reign and prosper." The Jews expected their Messiah to be king, but were disappointed that his kingdom was not of this world. Jesus never denied that the dispensation he came to set up was a kingdom, but he instructed them that it was a gracious and spiritual kingdom; established in the hearts of his disciples, of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. In his divine power and glory, Christ reigns over the universe, but as the mediator and Lord, he reigns over his universal church. Let us observe,

I. SOME THINGS CONNECTED WITH THE KINGSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST.

1. *He was typified as such.* By Melchizedec, David, and Solomon.

2. *He was appointed king by the authority of the Father.* God said to him, "Thy throne, O God," &c. And again, "I have set my king upon my holy hill." He said to him, "Rule thou in the midst of thy enemies." The Father hath committed all rule, and authority, and judgment to the Son. He hath given all things into his hand. The Father crowned him with glory and honor.

3. *He is the only king over his church.* "Head over all things." The "One Master," or ruler. He hath no fellow in the government of his people. All power both in heaven and earth is given unto him.

4. *His kingdom embraces his universal church.* To all who know him, believe in him, obey him, yielding him homage, and loyal affectionate tribute, honor his statutes, laws, and ordinances.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST. We notice,

1. *Righteousness.* He is the just one—the holy one of Israel. Hence his empire is one of purity. He came to reveal the way of righteousness, the principles of righteousness, the source of righteousness, and to give the power of serving him in newness of life.

2. *Wisdom.* He is the one "wise God." "The wisdom of God." It was predicted of him that he should "deal prudently." His wisdom involves omniscience, infallibility. He knoweth all things; treasures of wisdom and knowledge are his.

3. *Clemency.* Hence he holds out the sceptre of mercy to his enemies. He designs their restoration to allegiance and bliss. He seeks not to destroy, he came not to condemn but to save. His arrows are truth, and he seeks to slay sin, and rescue the sinner. Hence his merciful proclamations, and overtures of grace.

4. *Love.* He reigns in and over his people, by the exercise of his infinite and unspeakable love. He woos and wins the soul by the exhibition of his love. He commences his reign by shedding his love abroad in the heart. His laws, and ordinances, and requirements, are all the evidences of his love. He is love, and they that dwell in him, dwell in love, and love is the fulfilling of his laws. Observe,

III. HOW CHRIST CONDUCTS HIS ADMINISTRATIONS.

1. *He does so by his word.* This is his royal law; his statute book. It contains his mind, both concerning his friends and

enemies. Here is the charter of the blessings and privileges of his subjects. Here is the revelation of his threatenings to his foes. This word is the highest source of appeal, and nothing in duty, or ordinance, or doctrine, is obligatory unless written here.

2. *By his servants.* These include both angels and men; the celestial intelligences are ever waiting to know his will, and do his commands. "They are all ministering spirits," &c. His servants on earth are those whom he qualifies to teach and proclaim his word—to administer the ordinances and edify his church.

3. *By his Spirit.* He has obtained the gift of the Holy Ghost; and he sends down his Spirit to dwell in the heart, to instruct, enlighten, sanctify, comfort, and keep unto eternal life. The Holy Spirit also qualifies men for usefulness, blesses their labors, and renders efficient the means of grace. "When the enemy comes in like a flood," &c. Notice,

IV. THE PROSPERITY OF HIS REIGN. "A king shall reign and prosper." This is illustrated,

1. *By the past.* The early ages of Christianity; its rapid diffusion through the then known world; myriads converted to the truth, &c.

2. *By a survey of the present.* His word translated into hundreds of tongues—his servants proclaiming the gospel in almost every nation. Fields white to the harvest.

3. *By the certain realization of the future.* Angel flying through the midst of heaven, &c. Christ claiming the heathen, &c. "North giving up," &c. "The kingdoms of this world," &c. "His kingdom shall come, and his will be done," &c. The whole earth filled with his glory. Now this prosperity is certain; it must come to pass, for God hath spoken it in covenant to Christ, and in promise to the church.

APPLICATION.

1. Are you Christ's subjects? You are either such or his foes. His subjects know, fear, love, and obey him.

2. He has proclaimed an amnesty to the rebellious. "Let the wicked forsake his ways," &c. "As I live," &c.

3. The incorrigible he will destroy, Psalm ii. 9, to the end.

THE LOVE AND SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

"Who loved me, and gave himself for me."—GALATIANS ii. 20.

THE apostle has been showing that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified: that the law was designed to slay the vain hopes of men, and to lead them to Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness, or justification to every one that believeth. The law makes us sensible of our lost state, and works a death of all prospect of being saved by it, verse 19. Then the apostle shows, that the spiritual life of the Christian is one of faith on the Son of God, verse 20, &c. And he concludes this description in the interesting language of the text, "Who," &c. Let us consider,

I. THE PERSON REFERRED TO.

II. THE DECLARATION MADE RESPECTING HIM. "He loved," &c. And by way of application,

III. THE USE WE SHOULD MAKE OF IT.

I. THE PERSON REFERRED TO. The blessed person is spoken of in verse 19 as Christ, and as the Son of God.

1. *As Christ.* He was the anointed of God; called, and chosen, and qualified, and sent to be the Saviour of the world. Each of these terms is full of interest. In obedience to the call of the Father, he responded, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," &c. As the chosen of God, he was the only being in the universe possessed of every adequate attribute and qualification for the work. Help was laid on him that was mighty, on one that was sufficient. God delighted in him as his elect and beloved. For the immediate work he had to perform, God qualified him by preparing him a body, in which he should tabernacle, Hebrews x. 5. He was also anointed with the Holy Ghost in all his unbroken plenitude—the Spirit without measure was given to him. Then he was sent in the fulness of the times, and he appeared in the place aforetime predicted, and having entered on the fulfilment of his course, he fully glorified his Father in all things.

2. *Son of God.* As such he had the nature of the Father—he and the Father were one—he was "the brightness of his glory, and the express image," &c. Whoso saw him saw the Father. He was of one mind with the Father—he only willed what

the Father pleased, so the Father said, This is my beloved Son, &c. As such he is the most exalted being in the universe—King of kings, and Lord of lords—a name above every name—a throne, &c. All things were created by him and for him, &c. Then consider,

II. THE DECLARATION MADE: "He loved," &c. The text refers to three things,

1. The love of Christ.
2. The sacrifice of Christ, and
3. The appropriation of Christ.

1. *The love of Christ.* Now the love of Christ to man is the frequent subject of holy scripture—it is the very life of the gospel—it was the love of deep compassion—love of intense pity—a love which had the most striking difficulties to overcome—love to an object loveless, worthless, wrath-deserving, without a feature to attract it, "while we were yet enemies," &c., when in a state of pollution, &c. The dimensions of this love are beyond description, the length goes through the range of eternity, the breadth embraces immensity, the height soars upwards to the highest heavens, the depth descends to the verge of perdition.

"Buried in sorrow and in sin,
At hell's dark door we lay."

2. *The sacrifice of Christ.* "He gave himself." He became devoted for us. As the ram which Abraham saw in the solemn crisis—as the scape goat, over whose head the guilt was confessed, &c.—as the surety, so Christ took the place of the guilty, and on him was laid the iniquity of us all. *He* gave himself, it was his own act and deed. No man taketh my life, I have power, &c. It was the free-will offering of his own compassionate soul. He had been anticipating it for ages upon ages, he longed for it, &c. *He gave himself.* He brought not a meat-offering, a drink-offering—he gave not silver or gold, but "*himself*," his own soul, his own life, his very all.

(1.) He gave himself to deep humiliation, in becoming a man—made in fashion as a man, a poor man, a slave, or servant of servants.

(2.) He gave himself to reproach, and scorn, and indignation, and maltreatment; to insult, rudeness, contradiction, persecution.

(3.) He gave himself to calumny, hatred, a mock trial, &c.

(4.) He gave himself to *death*, even the death of the cross.

(5.) He gave himself to endure the outpouring of the wrath denounced against sin—he trod the wine-press, he took the cup, and tasted death for every man—he gave his soul a living sacrifice for human guilt—his heart he gave in all the exercise of his mission, and then emptied it of living blood, and shed every drop of it for the salvation of man. Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, &c. Then notice,

3. *The appropriation of Christ.* He loved "*me*," he gave, &c. "Me." Let us see,

(1.) Who *may* appropriate Christ? All who belong to our *world*. He is the appointed propitiation for our sins, and not ours only, &c.

All who have gone astray, or are guilty before God. "For on him was laid the iniquity of us all," he came to seek and to save sinners, &c.

All who are included in our species, "For he tasted death for every man." Now all in these several classes may appropriate Christ in his love and merits. But we ask,

(2.) Who *do* really appropriate Christ? Great difference between the may and the do. We know that many do not appropriate Christ. Some are ignorant of him, some disregard him, the mass are wrapped up in unbelief. Many are satisfied with hearing, and reading, or mere profession. They say, Lord, Lord, &c. Myriads in their works denying him, will not own his regal office. But, thank God, some can say with the apostle, "He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*." Those who have received Christ by faith, and none else can say this. Faith brings the virtue out of Christ into our souls—it makes Christ all our own, fills our souls with his grace and love, realizes what he is, and what he has done for us—only faith can say, "He loved me," "I live by the faith," &c. We ask,

III. WHAT USE WE SHOULD MAKE OF THIS SUBJECT?

1. *It should fill us with adoring gratitude.* Oh, the love of Christ to me! What a subject for praise and wonder! The love of Christ is the theme of every Christian's rejoicing, and constitutes the song of the redeemed in heaven forever.

2. *Should it not excite fervent love to him?* "We love him because he first loved us," &c. If we had a thousand hearts, he has a right to each and every one.

3. *Ought it not to induce examination?* Can we with holy assurance appropriate Christ—can we aver our love to him—the doom of those who love him not is fearful. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ," &c.

4. *We urge all now present to come and take a saving share in the love of Christ.* Be anxious for it, seek its application, its internal communication to your souls.

CHRIST'S SACERDOTAL PRAYER FOR HIS DISCIPLES.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."—JOHN xvii. 24.

OUR text is a part of our Lord's intercessory address to his Father on behalf of his church and people. He has already prayed for those who were then his disciples, and he now seeks the especial favor of his Father on all who, in after ages, should believe on his name. He prays that these may be one, united in love, even as the Father and Son were one. In our text, he prays for their eternal welfare; that they may be with him, and behold his glory. Consider the persons to whom the prayer refers; the distinction and bliss which Christ solicits for them; and the grounds on which they may rest for its realization.

I. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THE PRAYER REFERS. Now there can be no dispute as to the characters referred to. God has given all believers to Christ, ver. 20. All others reject Christ. Faith apprehends Christ, and receives salvation from him, and through him. The gospel draws the great and momentous line here—believing and non-believing. The believer is justified, accepted of God, and hath the witness in himself. The non-believer is condemned already, &c. Now those given to Christ, are variously described according to the various relations of Christ. As a Shepherd, they are his sheep. As a Captain, the soldiers of his cross. As a Teacher, his disciples. As a King, his subjects. As a Sacrifice, the ransomed by his blood. As to his affection for them, they are called his chosen, his elect, his precious ones. But the radical distinction is this, they are those, who have exercised faith in him, John i. 12. Now as the redeemed of Christ, and as enjoying the blessings of that redemption, by faith in Christ, they are given to Christ;—to be perfected in his will,—to be supported by his grace,—kept by his power,—conformed to his image, and finally to be the Saviour's joy and crown forever. Observe,

II. THE DISTINCTION AND BLISS WHICH CHRIST SOLICITS FOR THEM. Now the prayer specifies,

1. *Presence with Christ.* To be with Christ. This was the joy of the disciples who were favored with his corporeal presence. Sometimes to ecstasy; but this was occasional, limited, and chiefly connected with his sufferings and abasement; strictly, this was Christ with them. But the text refers to their elevation, to be with him in his kingdom and glory, the celestial paradise, his Father's house, where Paul longed to be. His assurance to his disciples was to this effect, John xiv. 1, &c.

2. *The vision of Christ.* To behold "his glory." The Jews had expected to see the Messiah in worldly glory. The disciples had seen his poverty, persecution, sorrows, &c., but now, Christ wills that they should behold his glory. His glory had been witnessed by Moses and the Israelites, by Solomon and the devout Jews. It had been seen in resplendent visions by Isaiah and Ezekiel. It had been seen by the three favored disciples on Tabor. It was afterwards seen by the disciples when he arose from the dead and ascended into glory; by Paul in his ecstasy; by John in the visions of the Apocalypse. But we presume all were but feeble displays to that which saints shall see in heaven—that which will be the beatification of the redeemed in glory. As far as possible, they will see his glory as the Son of God—the brightness of the Father's grandeur and majesty. They will behold his magnificent throne—see his radiant crown—witness the worship of the hosts of angels, &c.—perceive him exercising universal authority and power, and receiving universal homage and praise—behold him as the moral sun of that vast temple, the light and glory of the heavenly world. And in beholding, they will be the recipients, the participators of the same glory. His reflected light will be their intellectuality, their purity, their blessedness forever.

III. THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THEY MAY REST FOR ITS REALIZATION.

1. *It is clearly the will of God.* "Fea

not, little flock," &c. God gave them to Christ to be made meet, and to be then received, &c. Not his will that they should perish, &c. God hath given to them eternal life, &c.

2. *It is Christ's fervent desire.* His prayer is peculiarly emphatic. "I will." This is my ardent desire. As the Lord and head of the church, it is his gracious and official pleasure. "Him the Father heareth," &c. Besides, he has died for this end, &c. These are the fruit of his passion and travail. His eternal reward, &c.

3. *From the indwelling of the Spirit in their hearts.* As believers they have the Spirit of Christ witnessing, sealing, comforting, inspiring hope, as the first-fruits, &c. What can be the destiny of such? Not perdition, but heaven; the living water within them shall spring up, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. How needful then to seek conformity to Christ's holy image! If such our expectations, how holy, vigilant, should we be! Grace only can make us meet, &c.

2. The unbelieving wicked could not enjoy the glorious vision of Christ. It would condemn, overwhelm, distract, &c. No reciprocity of feeling.

3. We exhort all to seek a spiritual acquaintance with Christ now, that they may enjoy him forever. "Sirs, we would see Jesus," &c.

BARABBAS PREFERRED TO CHRIST.

"Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber." —JOHN xviii. 40.

IT has been generally remarked, that land rugged and barren on the surface is most distinguished for the preciousness of its minerals, and that valuable ore is seldom found beneath land that is rich and fertile. We are forcibly struck with the contrast which this presents to the divine word. The word of God is rich and fertile in every part. Its holy surface contains precious and instructive thoughts, and within, it is full of invaluable treasure. It s a deep mine of pure, and rich, and everlasting truth. We should never be satisfied, therefore, with the mere letter, but, by meditation and pious study, labor to extract the soul and hidden spirit, which are always lost to the inattentive and careless reader. We present our text as affording a theme in which these observations will be fully borne out. Look then at the text,

I. AS TO THE HISTORICAL FACTS WHICH IT CONTAINS. We have in the narrative,

1. *The person denominated "this man."* This was Jesus. A man in common with other men. Born of a woman, &c. A man especially resembling the first man, the second Adam. Without human father,—the perfect image of the glory of God. Yet a man differing essentially from all men. In his all-mysterious union with the divine nature, "God made flesh," &c. A man entirely for our sakes. Love to us caused him to assume our nature. "For though he was rich," &c. In the narrative we have,

2. *Barabbas.* An outcast, a robber, and a murderer. A man of violence and blood. One whose death seemed necessary for the safety of the state. We have,

3. *A multitude of persons.* "They all." Doubtless of all ranks and grades. Scribes, and Pharisees, and rabbis, and publicans, and sinners. A mass of every sort of Jerusalem's inhabitants. We have,

4. *The circumstances of each and all of those presented to us.* Jesus in custody,—Barabbas in prison,—and the occasion when a prisoner must be released according to custom. And we hear only one cry from the multitude. It is, Let Barabbas be free. Not this man,—no, let him be crucified. "Then cried they all again," &c. Well might we pause and wonder, especially if we contemplate the purity,—the goodness,—the sacred character of Jesus, and the infamy and moral degradation of Barabbas, for Barabbas was a robber. Surely truth had left our earth,—surely justice was exiled from the world. Surely holiness had taken an everlasting flight from the abodes of men. Now this is what we term the surface view of this striking text. Let us now dig into this mine of treasure, and we shall observe in this scene,

II. A HOLY DEITY APPARENTLY ACQUIESCING IN THE UNJUST ACCUSATION OF WICKED MEN. If truth, and justice, and holiness be banished from the earth, yet surely

they dwell on high. Will not God thwart the envy, malice, and wrath of the Jews? Will he not rescue his beloved Son from those lions and serpents? Will he not vindicate the interests of righteousness and goodness before eternity and heaven? How surprised must have been the devout on earth and the holy in heaven, when the Jews prevailed, and Barabbas was delivered to his friends, and Jesus to the fury of his enemies! The mob, agitated like the ocean in a tempest, with passion and wrath seize the holy and the just, and put him to death. Satan now has triumphed. Fallen demons rejoice. Hell has its carnival of mirth. Christ, though possessing all power, submits, and is led as a lamb to the slaughter. And angels, struck with wonder, gaze upon the scene. Well may we ask, What meaneth this? Who can solve the profound problem? The gospel does it.

Barabbas is the representative of a guilty world. Sunken, depraved, enfettered, condemned, awaiting the righteous retribution of heaven. Deserving to die, and having no means of escaping from the doom. The mercy of God is higher, deeper, wider, and longer, than the guilt of the sinner. Deity exalts his mercy,—expands his compassion, and essays a display of love which should encompass even the rebel man. But how can it consistently be manifested. Substitution is the only remedy. The sinner's nature and condition must be assumed. His wrath-exposed condition must be occupied by another. Who shall bear the due demerit and punishment of guilt. Suffer "the just for the unjust," and by his blood a full, and free, and everlasting satisfaction be made. Christ the blessed one was that substitute. It had been predicted of him seven hundred rolling years aforetime that "He should be bruised for our iniquities," &c. He fulfilled to the very letter the entire compact, and his own benevolent soul harmonized with the decree of the people, although it was against himself, when they cried, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Peter has shown us this harmony, Acts ii. 22, 23. Do you not see then that which appears a vile and bloodthirsty clamor on the surface of this text, is really sweet as heavenly music to the sinner's ear? For if Barabbas be not spared, and Jesus delivered up, we are all unredeemed and must perish forever. While we believingly acquiesce in this declaration, as in accordance with the designs of Jehovah in mercy to our world, yet there is another view in which this scene may be contemplated.

III. We see in these clamorous Jews a perfect representation of our own hearts. While we may feel indignant and condemn them, the word and spirit of God turn the condemnation against ourselves, and say to each one present, "Thou art the man." We appeal,

1. *To worldliness.* Is not worldliness in compact with Barabbas, a robber? Think of Lot's wife. Think of the wicked Gehazi. Think of Judas,—of Ananias and Sapphira, and shall we plead for it and prefer it to Christ? We appeal,

2. *To pride.* Is not pride a robber? Robbed angels of their glory,—man of his innocency,—unnumbered myriads of salvation. It is that which God will abase. Which impiously tries to share the glories of Jehovah. And yet how it is pleaded for! How it is idolized! How it is preferred to Christ!

3. *We appeal to unbelief.* Is not unbelief a robber? There is the banquet for the starving, but unbelief will not come. The promise of eternal life, but unbelief rejects it. The opened door of eternal glory, but unbelief locks it, and flings the key into the bottomless pit. The Saviour is at hand to work miracles of grace on all the wretched, but unbelief averts his arm, so that it is recorded he cannot do many mighty works there. And he retires grieving, "Ye will not come unto me," &c. We notice,

4. *All sin is robbery.* Every act of iniquity is a Barabbas. For all these rob God, and destroy the soul. It is the earthworm,—the blight,—the mildew,—the locust. And yet sin is cherished, pleaded for, preferred. Declaim not against the Jews, but let every one smite upon his breast, and say, Here is the Barabbas, the robber, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. We ask then what view do you take of this subject? On what side do you stand? For what plead ye?

2. Barabbas and Jesus cannot both be preferred. One must die. We can have either.

3. Let the Barabbas of our hearts be nailed to the cross, &c. Die, monster—perish, ingrate! &c

CHRIST'S ADDRESS TO THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

"But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."—LUKE xxiii. 28.

THERE is no subject so replete with lessons of high moment as that of the death of Christ Jesus. Here we may employ all our powers—here whole ages might be expended in profound meditation. These are the things which angels desire to look into—the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow. The most profound enigmas, and the most startling paradoxes, are met with here. Look at the sufferer—the most high Son of God, yet appearing as a vile, hated malefactor. Observe, his sufferings were righteous and proper, as the voluntary choice of the sufferer, in the capacity of surety and redeemer, yet as inflicted by men heinous, cruel, and incomparably wicked. See the vicissitudes to which the great and the good are exposed. Six days before he goes from Bethany to Jerusalem; a multitude attend him; the air resounds with joyous acclamation; hosanna is heard from thousands of lips, &c. Now he is treated with marked disdain; the same streets witness the contempt, &c.; the shout now is, Away with him! Both heaven and earth seem to have forsaken him; his friends are all fled; he is hurried to the place of public ignominious execution, as unworthy of life; even Barabbas is preferred to him. In this dark, horrid exhibition, there is seen one beautiful streak of light; there is one interesting incident, which the evangelist records—a number of women who bewailed and lamented for him. Tenderness and mercy had fled from the temple and the priesthood—from the professed pious and devout of the Jews; but it still retained its dwelling in the hallowed sanctuary of woman's heart; and these dared to feel, and to groan, and to lament loudly as the sufferer passed. Our text is the reply of our blessed Saviour, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not," &c. He, doubtless, referred to the calamities which the unbelief of the Jews would bring upon their nation. The recital of the Saviour's sufferings must affect every heart not petrified by sin. Surely it is not wrong to feel, or to give expression to feeling; but yet the address of Jesus to the devoted women may with propriety be applied to ourselves. We should chiefly weep for ourselves and for our children. Instead of weeping for the sufferings of Christ, let us weep with him; let our sorrows have the elements of his sorrow; and let us weep on account of the awful results which shall follow to those who weep not at all.

I. LET US WEEP WITH JESUS CHRIST. We need not weep for him because he chose to suffer—because he was able—because he delighted. He longed, &c. It behooved him, &c.; but, especially, because he will suffer no more. We now see Jesus who humbled himself, &c.; exalted, &c.; but we may weep with him. "He was a man of sorrows," &c. Let us look with Christ,

1. *At the insulted perfections of our heavenly Father.* God formed man for his glory, &c.; but how sin insults and despises him. It profanes and blasphemes his name—it spurns his righteousness—tramples on his purity—basely disregards his goodness—returns him hatred for love—disbelieves his truth—denies his being, or sets up rivals in senseless idols. Christ's soul burned with zeal for his Father's glory. Marvel not that his soul was pierced when he beheld the conduct of sinners towards him. Do we revere and love God? then let us weep with Christ.

2. *Let us look with Christ on the violated laws and government of heaven, and weep with Christ.* God's government is perfect, and wise, and good; but sin has thrown the moral world into disorder. Now there is darkness, and confusion, and war, and rebellion, and anarchy. The holy tables are broken and trampled under foot, &c. Think how this must have affected the soul of Jesus. Let us, then, weep with him.

3. *Let us look with Christ at the ravaging effects of sin on our world.* Paradise lost—a sterile wilderness—one great graveyard—nature groaning—human beings suffering. Could the sighs of all who suffer be concentrated! could all the groans be united! could all the tears be collected! Physical torture, mental distraction, moral anguish, all the effects of sin.

4. *Let us contemplate, with Christ, the eternal effects of sin on its votaries.* Consigning the body to the prison of the grave, with a view to a resurrection to shame and contempt—the soul to the black abyss, and to ceaseless tears and endless pain, &c. Christ saw all this, and it moved him to

deepest compassion, filled his soul with anguish, &c. But,

II. LET OUR SORROW HAVE THE ELEMENTS OF HIS SORROW. The sorrow of Jesus,

1. *Was holy.* It arose from his holy nature, and his love of holiness. All sorrow is not such. It may be merely physical, or the result of excitement; but his was that of principle—the pain arising from the rectitude of his nature. Now, true piety involves this—a holy indignation against sin because it is sin, &c.

2. *It was deep, intense sorrow.* Like a mountain it pressed him down—like a sea it swallowed him up; billow after billow, wave after wave, &c. This was the bitter cup he was ever drinking, &c. Now our tears ought to be copious—our hearts deeply affected, &c. "Rivers of tears run down mine eyes," &c.

3. *It was compassionate sorrow.* Discerning between the sin and the sinner; hated the one and loved the other; filled his heart, moved all the yearnings of his nature, &c.; absorbed and became the grand impelling principle of his life, &c.; all love, all benevolence, &c. Let our sorrow have these elements. Let it not be mere indignation at evil, at the shame and degradation sin has effected; but pity and tenderness to the poor sinner.

4. *It was embodied, practical sorrow.* It was more than feeling, it was expressed. It influenced, it produced self-denial. Marvellous liberality—unspeakable suffering—transcendent grace. "Ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus," &c. "He loved us, and gave himself for us." Now, our sorrow ought to be palpable. It should breathe, and move, and live, and labor, and suffer, &c. We should weep,

III. ON ACCOUNT OF THE RESULTS ARISING TO THOSE WHO WEEP NOT AT ALL. Here we may justly begin for ourselves. How little we have wept, as we ought, either for ourselves or our children. Our little love—limited holiness—many sins—often desertion of Christ, &c.; yet we have been little affected. Oh, that we could but feel as we ought, &c. But there is one view of the Saviour's sorrow peculiarly affecting: its influence on every human being will be great and everlasting. Its saving, exalting, and felicitating effects, and also its influence on those who perish. In one, life unto life; in the other, death unto death. Christ did not, could not suffer in *vain*. The blood of Jesus will rest on every human being, either to cleanse or deepen his guilt—either to absolve, or to sink lower in punishment—either to raise to an equality with angels, or to sink lower than lost angels. Nothing so terrific to the lost as the groans of the suffering Jesus—nothing so awful as the cross—nothing so horrible as the recollection of the gospel. Oh! this will deepen fearfully the sufferings of the lost. Now, Christ foreseeing the extreme sufferings of the Jews through their sin, he said, "Weep not for me," &c. Looking as we do and ought, into futurity, in reference to the state of the incorrigible, we should, indeed, "Weep for ourselves," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let our subject lead to right views of godly sorrow.* "For our sins," &c.

2. *Let it lead to deep compassion for the perishing heathen.* Look at them physically—mentally—morally—socially—eternally. Surely we must be affected, &c.

3. *Let our sorrow be genuine and influential.* Let it move our hands, and feet, and hearts. What can we do? What ought we to do? What will we do? Let us do what we can while it will be availing, &c.

THE OPENED FOUNTAIN.

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."—ZECH xiii. 1.

ZECHARIAH was a fellow-laborer with Haggai, and materially assisted those engaged in the erection of the second temple. He is styled one of the minor prophets, i. e. one whose predictions were of a limited character contrasted with those of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. But of the lesser prophets he was most appropriately denominated the sun. His prophecies had respect to the completion of the second temple, the coming of the Messiah, his sufferings and death, the enlargement and prosperity of his church, the conversion of all nations, and the millennial glory of the kingdom of Christ. Our text is a clear and striking prophecy of the death of Jesus as a propitiation for sin. Notice,

I. THE FOUNTAIN SPECIFIED. A fountain is a spring or well of water, but the

ext employs the term figuratively. It evidently refers to the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. Jesus compared himself to living waters; and as water is the emblem of purity, and is employed to cleanse and purify, so the blood of Jesus is the source of all purity, and cleanses from all sin. But the figure of a fountain is intended to denote,

1. *The fulness and abundance of Christ's merits.* A cistern only contains a limited quantity, and may be easily exhausted, but Christ's merits are as universal as the wants and misery of the world. He is as the ocean for abundance, as the sun, &c.

2. *The continuousness of Christ's merits.* A supply within itself, ever full and overflowing; cannot be any lack, &c.

3. *The perpetual purity of Christ's merits.* Much that is foul and unclean would defile even a pool of water, but a fountain has within itself the means of purification. So the blood of Jesus retains its immaculate nature, all its original holiness and efficacy, nothing can defile it or render it in any degree ineffectual.

II. THE OPENING OF THIS FOUNTAIN PREDICTED. "In that day," &c. This fountain was,

1. *Promissarily opened to our first parents and the patriarchs.* To our first parents God promised the Saviour. Abel had respect to it in the sacrifice he offered. So all the patriarchs, in their various offerings, had respect to this fountain.

2. *It was opened typically under the law.* All the sacrifices pointed to Jesus and his death. In victims slain a voice spake to the sinner and said, See thy desert, and see the type of him who shall die to save thee.

3. *It was opened prophetically by the predictions of holy men, who testified of Christ.* Thus Isaiah speaks of Jesus as a lamb led to the slaughter, &c. And to him gave all the prophets witness. Zechariah particularly predicted the very act of Christ's atoning sacrifice, xiii. 7, compared with Matt. xxvi. 31.

4. *This fountain was opened really when Christ was suspended on the cross.* It was customary to break the legs of crucified criminals when they wished to accelerate their death. Thus the executioners approached the bodies of Jesus and the malefactors, see John xix. 31. Christ's side is pierced. How wonderful the ways of God! The soldier had no orders to do it. As his act, it was one of cruel ferocity, wanton barbarism, but here was the finger of God, &c., verse 36, 37, and thus too was the text literally realized, a fountain was thus opened, &c. To this John afterwards refers, 1 John v. 6–8.

III. FOR WHOM THIS FOUNTAIN WAS OPENED. "For the house of David," &c.

First of all *for the Jews*, to the seed of Abraham according to God's promise. He came first to his own. The gospel first offered to them. You will see the wisdom and mercy of this fountain being first offered to the Jews.

(1.) Their day of grace was ending, their privileges closing. This was to be the last great act of mercy before their sun should set, and their national rejection and woes commence. Oh, there was infinite compassion in that command, "beginning at Jerusalem."

(2.) As a test of its efficacy. As he Jews possessed more light, &c., they were the most deeply guilty; therefore if it could save the very murderers of Christ, if the merits of Christ's death were first offered to the conspirators, to the crucifiers of Messiah; and if it could wash out their stains, what nation or people could doubt its virtue afterwards? And it did so. Three thousand, whom Peter charged with the murder of Christ, came to it, and were cleansed from all their iniquities. But,

2. *It was to be opened also to all the world.* "That repentance and remission of sin," &c. Hence the apostle said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be first spoken to you, but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Thus Paul says, "To me, who am less, &c., was this grace given, that I should preach," &c.; and in the vision of the Apocalypse the redeemed sing, &c., Rev. v. 9.

IV. THE GREAT DESIGN TO BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE OPENING OF THIS FOUNTAIN. "For sin and uncleanness." The removal of these is the full salvation of the sinner.

1. *He is guilty.* Guilty of sin, exposed to death. Without shedding of blood no remission. How is the sinner to escape? by faith in Christ's blood. "We have redemption in his blood, the forgiveness of sin," &c. The sinner who trusts in that blood shall be pardoned.

2. *Man is defiled, polluted.* His nature

corrupt, a bad head and a worse heart, a polluted spirit. How shall it be made holy? "The blood of Christ, God's Son, cleanseth," &c. "But if we confess," &c. In this fountain we have both justification and sanctification, pardon and holiness.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the believer reflect on his obligations to Christ.

2. Let every unpardoned sinner now come to him, &c., wash, and be clean.

3. There is no other medium of pardon and holiness.

CHRIST'S TRIUMPH OVER THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD.

"Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out."—JOHN xii. 31.

FOR this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Isaiah saw the Redeemer as a mighty commander travelling in the greatness of his strength, with dyed garments coming from Bozrah, and exulting in his omnipotence to save. The first promise of a Saviour referred to the great truth that the "seed of the woman," &c. It must never be forgotten that Christ came to emancipate as well as to ransom. To deliver from the power of Satan as well as to be the grand medium of the love of God to man. Our text conveys the idea of a conflict, and affirms on which side victory should terminate. "Now," says Jesus, "is the judgment of this world, and now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Consider, then,

I. SATAN IN HIS PRINCELY POWER AND DOMINION.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF HIS DISCOMFITURE AND OVERTHROW. "Now shall the prince," &c.

III. THE GROUND ON WHICH THE CERTAINTY OF THIS RESTS. "Now is the judgment," &c. Contemplate,

I. SATAN IN HIS PRINCELY POWER AND DOMINION. "The prince of this world." The character, attributes, and powers of the wicked one, are only incidentally referred to in the holy scriptures. But his titles clearly denote his fearful and malevolent character. He is described as a deceiver. The father of lies,—the destroyer,—the murderer,—the prince of darkness,—the prince of the power of the air,—the god of this world. Our text styles him, "the prince of this world." As a prince he is signalized for his power—his allies—his territories. Consider,

1. *His power.* Probably clothed with all the intellectual grandeur and energy he possessed when one of the shining host. The history of sin is the record of his evil influence.

2. *His allies.* Are of two kinds,—his fallen compeers called his angels or messengers, spirits equally depraved—fallen—accursed. His allies on earth are wicked persons who possess his spirit, and are committed to the side of evil. In whom he rules, and whom as instruments he employs in the cause of sin.

3. *His territory.* This includes the whole of our fallen world. No country or inhabited spot where he has not his possessions. His spell rests upon people of every color, climate, and nation. Not one land yet freed from his withering despotism. In maintaining his government in the world he employs the following elements of evil—ignorance—superstition—pride, and cruelty.

(1.) Mental debasement is the first element. His kingdom is the reign of night and darkness. This is essential to its duration. He hates all light and all knowledge. Where he reigns undisturbed, is the region of the shadow of death. "The kingdom of darkness."

(2.) Superstition. To meet the internal craving of the mind for some object of worship, &c., he has invented the whole region of polytheism or idolatry, from the worship of senseless idols to the adoration of demons.

(3.) Pride is the third essential element. The haughty uplifting of the mind against any superior control. Self-deification—haughtiness of spirit, the absence of meekness—humility, &c.

(4.) Cruelty. From the pride of the heart emanate envies, jealousies, strifes, wars, &c. He steels the heart—petrifies—fills with hate—transforms man into a vulture—makes him rapacious—ferocious—revengeful—implacable. Man the curse of his species—the foe of the world. Now we remark Satan's power is that of a usurper. He had seized and by subtlety de

ceived,—allured from allegiance—seduced, &c. This dominion is nearly as old as our world, and as we have seen, as extensive as the habitations of our race. What an amount of present wretchedness, misery, and wo, has been the result; and how fearful the endless state of wrath to which he has led millions of millions every year, until hell itself might have been supposed to have been filled to overflowing! But the text refers,

II. To the certainty of his discomfiture and overthrow. "The prince of this world shall be cast out." Not only his territory abridged, and power circumscribed, &c., but totally overthrown. He shall be spoiled, vanquished, and the world freed from his hellish dominion. He shall be cast out, have no spot left for his control within our world; but be tried, sentenced, chained, confined, &c. Now this seems demanded on the ground,

1. *Of the divine glory.* The works of God shall not be eternally marred, and his creation cursed by the usurper Satan. God's wisdom is destined to counteract the plans of the evil one. His power to overthrow his empire. His goodness to rescue mankind from his diabolical grasp. God's glory demands that he should be supreme over all his creatures.

2. *On the ground of the divine purposes.* God has devised a scheme to do all this. He has set his heart upon it. What can prevent its realization? Craft, energy, combination? Surely not! He is wise in counsel, he has said, and it shall be done; devised, and he will accomplish it.

3. *On the ground of the divine truth.* The word has proceeded out of the divine mouth. He has been reiterating it for nearly six thousand years. Every jot and tittle must be fulfilled. He has spoken to his Son in solemn covenant, "I will give thee the heathen," &c. He has spoken to his church. "As I live, the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth," &c. He will speak at the appointed time, and "say to the north, give up," &c.

4. *On the ground of the victories already achieved.* Every saint is a trophy, an instance that the prince of this world is cast out. In all ages he has had these. Early Christian ages—our own country—South Seas, &c. Now these are the streaks of the morning light, and are the prelude of certain and universal day. But observe,

III. The basis on which the certainty of this triumph rests. Christ is evidently laying the great stress of this on his own death. His hour was at hand. "Now is the judgment," or crisis, the momentous period when the effectual step shall be taken. Now the mighty conflict shall decide that Satan's power is gone, and that this world shall be freed from his direful reign. Hence the next verse at once ratifies this view. The death of Christ should be the concentration of all the divine plans, the key-stone of the stupendous arch, the basis of that kingdom which should overthrow the empire of the devil. Now I wish this to be clearly seen,

1. *By the death of Christ a way was opened by which the apostate sinner might return to God and live.* Satan knew God's hatred to sin, and the necessity that he should punish it. He therefore calculated if he could but seduce, that the sinner was inevitably lost. But by Christ becoming the sacrifice, God's justice is satisfied, and yet the sinner may live. Here is God's mercy in Christ, triumphing over Satan's malevolence. Now is the crisis, when a gracious way shall be opened from the gates of hell to the mansions of heaven. Every impediment is to be removed, God be the just God, and yet the justifier, &c.

2. *By the preaching of Christ's death men should be drawn to God.* "And I, if I be lifted up," &c. "The gospel is the power of God to salvation." "We preach Christ crucified, which is Christ the wisdom of God, and the power of God," &c.

3. *By the death of Christ was obtained the gift of the Holy Ghost, who should renew men in the likeness of God.* Here, in connection with the gospel, we have the very agency of God for casting out Satan. The death of Christ was the grand fact of the gospel. The great basis of the good news. Men on receiving its essential truths, receive the remission of sins and the life of the Holy Ghost, who changes the mind. Contrast the influences of the Holy Ghost with the elements of Satan's kingdom. He sanctifies and finally makes meet for eternal glory. Here ability is given to resist the evil one, to glorify God, and to shine forth in all the beauties of heavenly purity.

4. *By the death of Christ the prison-house of the grave should be entered and burst open to mankind.* Satan claimed death as his ally, and the grave as his prison. But now

the crisis was at hand when the Saviour, clothed in the vestment of our flesh, should through death destroy him that had the power of death, even the devil. Here was Satan's territory invaded. His fetters snapped, and a way of escape opened for the prisoners of hope. "O death, I will be thy plague," &c.

APPLICATION.

Our subject is adapted to give right views,

1. *Of Satan and his kingdom.* Powerful—formidable—dangerous.

2. *Of the great Redeemer.* Deliverer from the power of Satan, &c. And the only Deliverer.

3. *Under whose sway do we live?* Who has our hearts—influence, &c. Examine yourselves, &c. "O Jesus, ride on till all are subdued."

4. *Are we co-operators with Christ in his designs of mercy and love?* "He that is not with me," &c. Are you doing any thing? &c. If so, what?

THE CROSS, AND ITS ATTRACTION.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."—JOHN xii. 32.

OUR text directs us to the influence of the death of Christ, in bringing men into gracious contact with the Saviour. In the preceding verse, Christ refers to his triumph in casting out the prince of this world. Both are essential parts of our salvation. We must be freed from the powerful vassalage of Satan; but that is only half—we must be brought to God, and become the happy adopted children of his family. The state of man implied; the great event promised; and the glorious consequences affirmed, are the topics of our text.

I. THE STATE OF MAN IMPLIED. That is, distance. Mankind are invariably described as afar off. Now that is true, of course, only in a moral or spiritual sense; for Christ, in the omnipresence of his divine nature, is in all, and above all, and through all. Sinners, in their unregenerate state, are represented as foreigners—aliens—outcasts—ready to perish—dwelling in the region of death—lost. This is described under the similitude of the wandering sheep, the wretched prodigal, &c. Several passages of the divine word speak with great emphasis on this subject—"All we, like sheep, have gone astray," &c. There is a perfect contrast in mankind, and in the character of the blessed Saviour. He is pure—they defiled; he is harmless—they guilty; he approved—they condemned; he the reflection of God's likeness—they are of their father, the devil; he delights in holiness and goodness—they in iniquity and evil; he is wise, true, and benevolent; they ignorant, deceived, hateful, and hating one another, without Christ, and without God in the world. Now this is both a state of guilt and misery. Man has destroyed himself—freely strayed from God—forsaken the fountain of living waters, &c. Their misery is internal restlessness and fear, and finally, condemnation and wrath. This is the state of man implied. Notice,

II. THE GREAT EVENT PROMISED. "And I, if I be lifted up." Christ clearly refers to his death. "As Moses lifted up the serpent," &c. Christ does not speak as though it were uncertain or contingent; he had it all in view. This was the crisis or judgment of the preceding verse. Now, in this event observe,

1. *It had been clearly foretold.* Not only the death itself, but the manner of the death; see Deut. xxi. 22; Gal. iii. 13. Now, the erection of the brazen serpent also typified it in the most striking manner. "Even so must the Son of man," &c.

2. *It was connected with the deepest ignominy and debasement* Only the very vilest of malefactors suffered this death; so that Christ could not stoop lower than this. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, *even* the death of the cross," &c.

3. *It was peculiarly public, and, therefore, capable of universal establishment.* He died in the most public manner. The sentence of the Roman governor is passed—the fact is recorded—no event of ancient times capable of more full corroboration. The time, and the place, and the manner, all adapted to render it notorious and indelible to the latest posterity. Jews and Gentiles, the Roman authorities, are all at hand if the deed is doubted. Observe,

4. *It was an act of self-devotedness on the part of the Saviour.* Possessing infinite power within himself, he could say, no man taketh away my life, &c. "I have power to lay down my life," &c. He was freely passive in the hands of his enemies. He

could have escaped, or have discomfited, &c. But for this great end he was born—he had this ever in prospect—he even longed for it. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," &c.; and, though his humanity seemed to shrink at the last from it, yet, when he had prayed, he was delivered from that fear, and he said to those who came to arrest him, "Here am I." He laid down his life on the cross—yielded it up as an act of devotedness to the eternal interests of our world. When he had received the vinegar, "he cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost." Consider,

III. THE GLORIOUS CONSEQUENCES AFFIRMED. "I will draw all," &c. Now, this influence of the Saviour's death is referred to, ac,

1. *Attractive.* "I will draw." Now, as an event it was calculated to draw the attention of mankind to it. The character of the sufferer—his miraculous fame—marvellous patience—the phenomena at his death, &c. So we find it. Josephus, the Jewish historian, particularly refers to it; so pagan writers; but the attraction referred to, is that of moral or gracious attraction. It should bring men to Christ; those afar off, &c.; those haters, &c. of Christ. It should attract the hearts and consciences of men—influence their lives and conduct. The idea is that of persuasion, not of terror—not force, &c. "The law was given by Moses," &c., under circumstances of extreme terror, but the gospel should win, &c. We see this exemplified in the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost, and the apostles in their first ministrations of peace and mercy. Christ crucified is the most marvellous display of love to the world—the embodiment of infinite grace, &c. Nothing can melt if this fails. "Herein is love," &c. "See there my Lord upon the tree," &c. "They shall look on him they have pierced," &c. This influence,

2. *Is elevating.* "I will draw to me."

(1.) To my cross, as the ground of hope and glory.

(2.) Crucifixion with me. Elevation above the world. The grace of God exalts.

(3.) To Christ in heaven as the object of our love. "Set your affections," &c.

(4.) And, finally, to the enjoyment of Christ in his glory.

3. *This influence is to be universal.* There is to be nothing restricted in it—not with Judaism for one nation, but for all people. It shall affect all—Saviour of all, and finally triumph over all, and be the instrument of erecting Christ's kingdom from shore to shore, &c. Diffuse Christianity throughout the world, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Observe, the cross alone can save the sinner.* "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross." Here is the one remedy for a world's sin and misery.

2. *It saves, by drawing to Christ.* We must come to him, &c. Misery and death in distance from him.

3. *The church must keep Christ lifted up.*

"'Tis all our business here below," &c.

4. *The world's moral destiny rests upon this.* Never failed—never can, &c.—"Christ the power of God," &c.

PILATE AND JESUS.

"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it. Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us, and on our children."—MATT. xxvii. 24.

HISTORY presents no events at all comparable in importance to the sufferings, trial, and death of Jesus. This is of necessity true, if you consider the dignity of the Saviour, the intensity of his sorrows, and the grand atoning design of his death. In matters so truly momentous, we should not overlook any incident, however apparently trivial in its character; for every event must be considered as a connective link in the great transactions which the Messiah came to accomplish. Our text relates to that part of the Saviour's life when brought before Pilate, and the course that Pilate adopted on the occasion. At this time Palestine was subject to the Roman power, and Pilate was the viceroy, or procurator, under the Emperor Tiberias. His character is represented by the historian as being peculiarly base, sordid, and oppressive. He greatly excited the enmity of the Jews by his obnoxious conduct, especially in introducing effigies of Cæsar, to which he required the Jews to yield almost the homage of divine worship. At one time it is relat-

ed by Josephus, that he commanded the soldiers to put to the sword a number of Jews for resisting his oppressive enactments. It is to this, probably, Christ referred, when speaking of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, Luke xiii. 1. Our text introduces him to our notice as the judge by whom the anointed of God is to be condemned to die. Let us,

I. Contrast the judge with the prisoner. How different to ordinary cases! Usually the culprit is of the lower and baser class, and the judge one who has been exalted, on account of his integrity and worth, to the judicial station. But here the judge was a pagan—an oppressor—sordid, vain, and ambitious. Look at the prisoner. Think of his divine majesty—the Son of God—the Holy One of Israel. His spotless integrity—his boundless benevolence—his merciful mission. He came to enlighten, to emancipate, to bless, to redeem.

> "Blessings abound where'er he reigns;
> The prisoner leaps to lose his chains;
> The weary find eternal rest,
> And all the sons of want are blest."

Pilate was the worst of judges—Christ the Prince of peace; Pilate sordid—Jesus overflowing with generosity; Pilate a curse to the people—Jesus the blessing of the wretched; Pilate, whose name is handed down as execrable to posterity—Christ, whose name will endure forever.

II. Contrast Pilate with the Jews. Odious as Pilate appears, yet he rises in the scale of comparative excellence when contrasted with the Jews. The Jews had superior light. They had the writings of Moses and the prophets; they were expecting a Saviour; they had heard and seen the teaching and miracles of Christ. In these, how elevated above Pilate in their privileges; yet how they sink beneath the Roman governor! They hate Christ without a cause—they enviously refuse to acknowledge his righteousness and excellencies—they basely bear false witness to convict him—they madly clamor for his life. With insatiable ferocity they persevere, until they obtain his condemnation; with unparalleled presumption they cry for his blood—the blood of the Holy One—to rest upon them and their children. In the midst of this, Pilate adopted the following course to deliver Christ from their hands:—He publicly declares the innocency of Jesus—"I find no fault in him at all." He sends him to Herod, that he may be freed from the responsibility of condemning a just man. He wishes Christ to be the object of their national clemency, and hence proposes that Barabbas should die, and Christ be set at liberty. He endeavors to save his life, by delivering Christ rather to be scourged, thinking thus to excite their pity and commiseration. He finally, when all other expedients fail, takes water, &c. This act was strikingly public, and in accordance with a Jewish rite established by the founder of that dispensation, Deut. xxi. 1, &c. Now, in all this we see how superior even Pilate was to the envious and wicked Jews. But,

III. We will contrast Pilate with himself. We have heard his attestation of Christ's innocence—we have seen his expedients to save him—we have witnessed his public refusal to be accountable for his death; yet, after all, he yielded. He delivers him to death; he gives authority for the cross to be the instrument of death; he gives orders to the executioners—to the soldiery; and, whatever Pilate may think, or feel, or say, or do, Jesus dies by his judicial authority. On the side of Christ was enlisted—the understanding of Pilate—the judgment of Pilate—the conscience of Pilate; but, on the side of the Jews, and against Christ, were the passions of Pilate—his love of fame—his disregard of justice—his violation of truth. In this act of Pilate, however, observe,

1. *It accomplished the types and prophecies of scripture.* The passage I have read—the whole ceremonial law was fulfilled in Christ. It had been predicted how Christ should be scorned, falsely accused, and condemned.

2. *It established the righteousness of the Saviour.* We have now two evidences of Christ's moral excellency: the testimony of his friends and disciples, even of the apostate Judas; also of the judge on his trial, "I find no fault at all." "I am innocent of the blood of this just man."

3. *It ratified the condemnation of the Jews.* Thus Providence allowed the Jews to fill up the measure of their iniquity. To exhibit their hypocrisy, avarice; to their cruelty to prophets and unbelief, they now added the murder of the Son of God. "This is the heir, come and let us kill him," &c.

APPLICATION.

What do we learn?

1. *The infatuation of a deceived conscience.* Conscience strove, spake, and wrought within Pilate; but he blinded it, silenced it, and soothed it into quiescence. How? By the water washing his hands, &c. How futile, foolish, vain! How many are thus guilty, by placing religious rites and forms in the place of practical religion, &c.; by deathbed confession; by legacies, &c.

2. *Unrepented sins will eventually ruin their victims.* Thus Pilate, three years after the death of Christ, was deposed for cruelty and banished, and, in horror and wretchedness, committed suicide. Thus the Jews, also, had their prayer answered, "Let his blood," &c. So all impenitent sinners.

3. *There is a fountain open for all sin and sinners.* Oh, every one come to it now, and wash, and be clean.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

"And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him."—LUKE xxiii. 33.

CHRIST crucified is the grand theme of the Christian ministry; the great apostle of the Gentiles ever preached this, avowed his determination to know nothing else among men, nor to glory in any thing, save the cross of Christ. Condemned indeed should we feel if this subject should only be published on that one day in the year, which Christians, in past ages, have fixed upon, for the more direct celebration of the death of the Redeemer. All the discourses of the year must derive their power and glory from this subject; and the daily theme of our meditation must be the work of Jesus, "who loved me and gave himself for me." We may, however, on this occasion, dwell more particularly on the literal facts associated with the death of Christ. The text furnishes us with three striking particulars.

I. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S DEATH, "He was crucified." Crucifixion was a Roman punishment, and was never inflicted but upon the most debased characters, the most aggravated offenders; it was, therefore, ever associated with the deepest infamy.

1. *It was generally preceded by scourging.* This was often so severe that the victim died beneath the horrid lash. Our Redeemer was thus scourged—he was bound to a pillar—exposed to the derision of the multitude, and long furrows were made on his sacred back.

2. *The criminal bore his own cross.* This was done to exhibit the justice of the sentence, that he had brought the misery upon himself by his own crimes. How inapplicable to Christ! Pilate found no fault in him, yet he bore the cross and despised the shame. You remember that when Christ could bear it no further, Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry it to Calvary; and in this, he was a type of every disciple of Jesus,

> "Shall Simon bear the cross alone,
> And all the rest go free?"

3. *In crucifixion, the criminal was nailed to the wood, and then suspended on the cross.* Large nails were driven through the hands and feet, and thus the body was left to endure all the agony arising from the torn and bleeding wounds. Thus it was with Jesus; those feet which had traversed Judea on errands of mercy, and those hands which had so often been opened to bless the people, were now cruelly nailed to the accursed tree.

4. *A stupifying draught was generally given to the sufferer.* This was composed of medicated wine and myrrh, and was intended to intoxicate, so as to render the sufferer less sensible of pain, see Mark xv. 23; this Christ refused; he would not allow his holy mind to be disturbed by the stupifying potion.

5. *Crucifixion was an exceedingly lingering death, but was sometimes accelerated by other means.* When nailed to the cross a guard was placed to watch the sufferer till he expired, which was not on some occasions for days. Death was hastened sometimes by suffocation, or by breaking the limbs of the victim. You remember in Christ's case, that before the executioners came to do this, he had cried with a "loud voice and given up the ghost." But to make sure of his death, a soldier thrust his spear into the Saviour's side, from which flowed blood and water. Such was the nature of the death of Jesus. Notice,

II. THE PLACE OF HIS DEATH. "Calvary." Sometimes called Golgotha, which

signifies the place of skulls. It was the place of execution—the hill of infamy. Around the spot were scattered the bones of criminals who had suffered there. The apostle particularly refers to the place of Christ's death. "without the gate," Heb. xiii. 12. And here we are taught,

1. *That Christ's death was for Jew and Gentile.* Not to be confined to those allied to Jerusalem or Judea.

2. *That the Christian institution had no connection with the Jewish ritual,* but that the whole ceremonial of the Jewish system was abrogated by Christ. We must leave Jerusalem to find the crucified Redeemer.

3. *The place reminds us too of the prominence and publicity to be given to Christ's death.* It was not a secret thing, but open and before the world. Thus, too, is the doctrine of his death to be made known to every people, and nation, and tongue. Christ must be lifted up to the whole world.

III. The agency employed in effecting Christ's death. Then "they," &c.

1. *The Jews were the procuring agents.* "He came to his own, but his own received him not." The Father sent last of all his Son, but they said, "this is the heir, let us kill him." The Jews falsely accused him, and through envy put him to death.

2. *The Romans were the instruments employed.* The time had arrived when the Jewish power had ceased, the sceptre had departed, so that they could not put him to death. But how striking the contrast between the Jewish religionists, and the Roman pagans! Pilate wished to release him—the Romans had no desire for his death; but the Jews, his own people, cried until they prevailed, "Crucify him, crucify him," &c.

3. *But in connection with all, we must not forget the purpose of God, the design of heaven.* God had predetermined to give his Son; Jesus had offered himself as a sacrifice for sin; he came freely to live, suffer, and die for the world. Yet do not suppose that this influenced the Jews; moved by wickedness, and that only, they put him to death. But God, in the whole, consulted the glory of his own character, and the salvation of the sinner. Hence, almost every event had been predicted. Thus it was written, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. But for sin Christ had not died. Here are motives for contrition and true repentance.

2. But for his death, there had been no salvation. Here is our only hope of eternal glory.

3. The minister's great work. It is to cry aloud, "Behold the Lamb of God," &c.

CHRIST'S PRECIOUS BLOOD.

"The precious blood of Christ."—1 Peter i. 19.

The word precious signifies valuable, of great worth.

(1.) It is applied in the divine word to human life. One of the captains sent to seize Elijah said, O man of God, let my life and the life of these fifty servants be *precious* in thy sight.

(2.) It is also applied to the blood and death of the saints, "And precious shall their blood be in his sight." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

(3.) It is applied to the divine word, "The word of the Lord was precious in those days."

(4.) To the redemption of the soul, "The redemption of the soul is precious." And,

(5.) To wisdom. "Wisdom is more precious than rubies."

(6.) Loving-kindness of God. "How precious is thy loving-kindness, O God!"

(7.) It is applied to Christ as the foundation-stone. "Behold, I lay in Zion a precious corner-stone," &c.

(8.) To the promises. "Whereby are given to us precious promises," &c.

(9.) To faith. "That have obtained like precious faith."

Finally, it is applied to Christ's blood "The precious blood of Christ."

I. It is precious comparatively.
II. It is precious intrinsically.
III. It is precious superlatively.

I. It is precious comparatively. Every creature of God is good. He made nothing in vain; not a leaf, pebble, grain of sand, drop of water. All full of God. We see more of the divine glory in the animal creation. All creatures are precious, so much so, that his wisdom, power, and goodness

were employed in forming them, providing for them, &c. They are all formed with love of life. How they cling to it! Cruelty is abominable wickedness, insulting to God. God however was pleased, under the old dispensation, to allow some of these creatures to be slain for sacrifices, &c. God in this exhibited the evil and desert of sin, the doctrine of mediation, the provision of a substitute. Now, however precious the blood of these creatures, yet it possessed no real merit in reference to the sin of man.

> "Rivers of oil and seas of blood,
> Alas, they all must flow in vain."

They were but shadows, symbols, types, &c.

II. CHRIST'S BLOOD IS PRECIOUS INTRINSICALLY.

1. *The blood of a human being.* You may learn God's estimate from the price he set upon Cain, Gen. iv. 15. When he spake to Noah, Gen. ix.

2. *The blood of an innocent, spotless being.* Men may deserve to die. "Soul that sinneth," &c. Christ was perfect, no stain, no weakness, no guile.

3. *The blood of a holy, benevolent being.* He was endowed with every excellent quality; just, good, merciful. Every virtue and grace in him in a state of perfection.

4. *The blood of the Son of God.* Christ was the tabernacle of the Deity, all the fulness of the Godhead. A creature is great in proportion to the resemblance to Deity. "Christ is the express image," &c. What value it imparted to Christ's person and work, the life of God's anointed Christ! If all creatures had been sacrificed in earth and heaven, not equal to this. Could easily have created more, but God never had, nor ever will have, but one "only begotten Son," Jesus Christ.

III. CHRIST'S BLOOD IS PRECIOUS SUPERLATIVELY.

1. *Christ's blood made a true and real atonement for sin.* Which no other blood did or could. Animals could not. A million of them not equal to one soul. How could the blood of unconscious, short-lived animals, atone for immortal souls? Angels could not. Sin affected body and soul. No bodies. Besides, a different order. The law was violated by human nature, and human nature must suffer or satisfy the broken law. Man could not. All guilty. Law demanded his life. When he had given that he had nothing left. Now the law demanded obedience, Christ rendered it, and gave his own blood or life for the redemption of the sinner. It was truly human nature, though holy, and therefore possessing infinite virtue and efficacy.

(1.) This atonement extended to all sin. The figurative atoning sacrifices under the law, made no provision for reckless, daring, presumptuous sins; but Christ's blood extends to all manner of sins and blasphemies, &c.

(2.) This extends its influence to all sinners. Priests of old made an atonement for the congregation of Israel and proselyte strangers, Christ for the whole world. "Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man." "Who gave himself," &c. "And he is the propitiation," &c. And this extends to all ages. Of old the sacrifices had often to be renewed—the great sacrifice once every year. But this reaches from the beginning to the end of the world, eternity to eternity. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," Heb. ix. 28, x. 11, 12, 14.

2. *Christ's blood has given a most illustrious exhibition of the divine glory.* Of holiness—sin pardoned, not palliated. God displayed his great abhorrence of sin. Justice magnified, and iniquity punished. Mercy triumphing in harmony with inflexible righteousness. God inexorably just and yet the Saviour.

3. *His blood has procured for us inexpressibly great and precious blessings.* Forgiveness of sin, peace and reconciliation with God, purity of heart, final victory over our enemies, meetness for eternal glory.

APPLICATION.

Value this blood, apply it, glory in it, exhort sinners to come to it.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

"And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."—1 COR. xv. 4.

THE gospel which the apostle preached, which the Corinthians believed, and by which they were saved, seems to comprehend two great facts, the death and resur-

rection of the Lord Jesus Christ. To these facts our attention of course is often called. They are facts with which we should be clearly acquainted, and fully conversant. On these, rest the hope of the world. To these the sinner's attention must be directed, and in the exercise of faith in these, he obtains righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Botn the death, and resurrection of Jesus were the subjects of prophecy, and were clearly foretold by himself. Let us then contemplate the resurrection of Christ.

I. In the things which it presupposes and involves.

1. *It involved his death.* He was condemned to die. He was nailed to the cross. There he was suspended several hours. The executioners pronounced him dead. The soldier thrust his spear into his side, &c. It was evident to the multitude that he was dead. His death was inflicted by the authority of Pilate, at the request of the Jews, and in the presence of the populace of Jerusalem.

2. *He was buried.* His body was requested, and given up to Joseph of Arimathea. It was placed in a new sepulchre, alone. A stone was rolled to the mouth of the tomb, and that was sealed by the Roman signet, and the place carefully guarded by soldiers.

3. *The body of Christ left the tomb.* Did he arise, or was he stolen? If stolen, by whom? His timid disciples, who had all fled when he was arrested, would not have courage. If they forsook a living Saviour, would they have the temerity to steal his corpse? Besides, this would be to charge the Roman soldiers with unparalleled stupidity and inconceivable criminality. Had it been stolen, why was not a reward offered for its recovery? Why not arrest his disciples? Especially, how came it to pass that they allowed them to teach and preach his resurrection?

4. *His resurrection was fully attested.* By those who saw him, who heard him speak, who conversed and ate with him. He was seen by Mary Magdalene, by Peter, by the twelve, by five hundred brethren at once, by Saul on his way to Damascus, &c. He was seen at different times and occasions, seen often, seen when he left this earth with his glorified body, and ascended up into heaven.

5. *These witnesses had no worldly inducements to testify to a falsehood.* They had never been over-credulous, but unbelieving and slow of heart. They had no interest in being deceived, or in deceiving. It was not for their worldly honor, again to be the disciples of the crucified Nazarene. Poverty, reproach, scorn, persecution, and even death were their only reward. Yet they lived and died bearing witness to the resurrection of Jesus.

6. *In the city of his death thousands in a few weeks became his followers.* Peter openly declared both his death and resurrection. He charged the Jews with murdering the Prince of life, and he boldly stated that he had risen from the dead. Nor was he contradicted. His doctrine came in power and truth to the hearts of the people, and five thousand were soon enrolled under the standard of king Messiah. But let us consider,

II. Some of the things connected with Christ's resurrection.

1. *It was according to the scriptures.* To the type as in the history of Jonah. To the prophecies of the Jewish seers. To Christ's assertion that the temple of his body he would rebuild in three days. Also to his express teaching that on the third day he would rise from the dead.

2. *It was attended with circumstances of peculiar glory.* The earthquake, the rolling away of the stone, the mission of angels, the overwhelming the soldiers with terror.

3. *It was an act of stupendous power.* This was Christ's most sublime miracle. To raise others was supernatural, and evidenced his Godhead. But especially when he had power to take up his own life—to resuscitate his own body, and to exclaim, in the self-sufficiency of his omnipotence, "I am he that was dead, and am alive," &c.

4. *It was an event most necessary and important.* It was essential to the truth of his teaching. To the validity of his Messiahship. To his victories over death, Satan, and the grave. It ratified his engagements. It was the evidence that his sacrifice was accepted, and laid a solid basis of hope on which a guilty world might roll its sin and misery.

5. *Christ thus becomes the resurrection and the life, and the first-fruits of those who slept.* He was the first begotten from the dead. He proved that he had the keys of life and death. And he appeared as the

first sheaf of that countless number who by his Almighty power shall be raised from the dead. He became the plague of death, and the destroyer of the grave. He will put forth his great power in raising his people from the dead in the likeness of his glorious body.

APPLICATION.

1. To you we declare this crucified and risen Saviour. We invite you to contemplate his person, character, and work. Especially regard him as having loved you, died for you, and risen again for you, for your pardon, justification, acceptance, renewal, and everlasting salvation.

2. The Christian has the internal evidence of Christ's resurrection. Christ in his heart, "the hope of glory."

3. Now death has lost its sting, and the grave is but the passage to immortality.

4. Despisers and unbelievers will be raised by Christ to everlasting contempt.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION

"And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."—LUKE xxiv. 50, 51.

JESUS came into our world that it might be blessed by him and in him. The law, which exhibited the purity and justice of God, was given by Moses; but grace, or the revelation of the favor of God to our guilty race, came by Jesus Christ. Well might angels sing at his nativity, "Glory to God in the highest," &c. Well might they say of him, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee," &c. He came emphatically as the mercy promised to the fathers, to bless men by turning them from their iniquities. His ministry began with the proclamation of blessings to the captives, &c. His sermon on the Mount was full of blessings; he went up and down doing good, and blessing mankind; he died praying for blessings on his murderers; when he arose and met with his disciples he blessed them; and now his mediatory work on earth is finished; he is returning to the presence and glory of the Father; and it is written in the text, that when he had led his disciples out as far as Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them, &c. Notice,

I. THE PLACE OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION Bethany, a place on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives. Here he had often sojourned with his beloved disciples, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Bethany signifies a house of sorrow, and Gethsemane was near to this spot, where he endured his agony. It had also been predicted by the prophet, that he should ascend from the Mount of Olives, Zech. xiv. 4. Observe,

II. THE TIME OF THE ASCENSION. Forty days after his resurrection, Acts i. 4. During this period he was repeatedly seen of his disciples, and gave the most demonstrative evidence of his resurrection, and enabled them clearly to be satisfied as to his identity, &c. During these forty days his enemies had ample time to examine the declarations made respecting his resurrection, and, if false, of undeceiving those who gave credence to them. During this time he also spake many important things concerning the kingdom of God, Acts i. 3. Thus, too, his disciples were prepared for his personal removal from them.

III. THE MANNER OF HIS ASCENSION.

1. *It was visible.* They were beholding him, looking upon him. It was in the light of day. "While they beheld," Acts i. 9. In the presence of a number of witnesses, &c.

2. *It was evidently connected with the ministry of angels.* "A cloud," it is said, received him. Most probably, a cloud of angelic beings. These had announced his conception—sang an anthem of praise at his birth—ministered to him in the wilderness and in the garden. It was they who related the fact of his resurrection, and now—

> "They brought his chariot from above
> To bear him to his throne;
> Clapp'd their triumphant wings, and cried,
> The glorious work is done."

It is said, "He was taken up," or "carried"—borne by his attendants, the celestial convoy.

3. *It was while he was in the act of blessing his disciples.* Thus showing that his grace and tenderness had not been chilled by the painful cross, or the gloomy sepulchre. Thus, also, he gave the last proof of his unchanging love to his disciples How necessary this when he was departing from them; how necessary to cheer and encourage them in the arduous work of preaching Christ crucified to the world!

IV. The place to which he ascended. "Into heaven." The angels also said, "This same Jesus, which is taken from you into heaven," &c. Acts i. 11. He had said, that he should return unto the Father—"To my God and to your God." It is also said, that he is exalted at "the right hand of God," Acts ii. 33. There the dying Stephen beheld him, "standing on the right hand of God," Acts vii. 55. See also Psalm cx. 1; Eph. i. 20. He ascended to that heavenly world from whence he descended, and from which, in like manner, he will come the second time, without a sin-offering, to salvation. Notice,

V. The great ends of Christ's ascension.

1. *He ascended that he might possess the rest and joy promised him by the Father.* "Who for the joy that was set before him," &c. Heb. xii. 2. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Luke xxiv. 26; Phil. ii. 9; Isaiah liii. 11, 12.

2. *He ascended that he might exhibit his conquests to angels and men.* Hence this event had been anticipated by the psalmist, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive," &c. Psalm lxviii. 18; Acts i. 9; Eph. iv. 8. He ascended as "the Bozrah conqueror," Isaiah lxiii. 1, &c.

3. *He ascended that he might take possession of heaven on behalf of his people.* He entered as the Redeemer—as the Head of the church—as the Bridegroom, &c.—as the Forerunner, &c.—as our great High Priest, &c.—"I go to prepare a place for you," &c. John xiv. 1. "Entered into heaven for us," &c. Heb. ix. 24.

4. *He ascended that he might send down heavenly blessings on his church.* "He hath received gifts for men," &c. "Exalted as a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins." Especially to send down the Holy Spirit. "It is expedient for you that I go away," &c. John xvi. 7, xv. 26; Acts v. 31, &c.

5. *That he might carry on his mediatorial work in heaven.* In heaven he appears as our great High Priest, interceding, presenting the persons and services of his people, and sending down the rich effusions of his Spirit and grace. Thus he sustains and perpetuates his kingdom in the world.

6. *That he might exercise his regal authority until his enemies become his footstool.* Psalm cx. 1; Matt. xxii. 24; Luke xx. 43; Acts ii. 35.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the true dignity and glory of the Son of God.* How exalted! how glorified!

2. *The honor conferred on human nature.* Seated on the right hand of the majesty on high.

3. *The hope with which it should inspire the people of God.*

4. *The certain overthrow of his foes*

INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

"He ever liveth to make intercession for them."—Hebrews vii. 25.

Jesus Christ having finished his work both of obedience and suffering on earth, entered into the holiest of all, where, says the apostle, "he ever liveth," &c. During his ministry here, he interceded for mankind. How sublime, rich, and edifying his sacerdotal prayer! John xvii. How compassionate his dying request! "Father, forgive them," &c. But the full execution of his intercessory exercises was reserved for the heavenly world. In the presence of God he appeared with his own blood, which had been shed for sin, and as the perpetual priest of his church, and the one mediator between God and men, "he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The place—the nature—the objects—and the perpetuity of Christ's intercession are presented to us in the text and its connections. Observe, then,

I. The place of Christ's intercession. That is the heavenly sanctuary, typified under the law, by the holiest of all, Heb. ix. 24. Hence he was predicted of, as a "priest upon his throne." He not only ascended to the right hand of God as a prince, to carry on his government; but also as a Saviour, on whom it devolves to bless his people, and make intercession for them. Thus John beheld him in the midst of the throne, having the appearance of a lamb as it had been slain, Rev. v. 6. Thus as a priest of more exalted dignity than those under the law, he carries on his

cerdotal work in the highest heavens, where "he ever liveth," &c.

II. The nature of his intercession. To intercede, is to plead on behalf of, and for the benefit of others. In the days of his flesh, Christ interceded by holy, fervent prayers for both his disciples and his murderers. It is matter of doubt, whether he now intercedes vocally or whether his intercession implies only his appearing before God in his mediatorial capacity, and exercising his will that the blessings of redeeming mercy should be imparted to mankind. The poet has said,

> "Five bleeding wounds he bears,
> Received on Calvary,
> They pour effectual prayers;
> They strongly speak for me;
> Forgive, forgive, they ever cry,
> Nor let that ransom'd sinner die."

It is evident that the intercession of Christ is identified,

1. *With perfect knowledge and wisdom.* He only asks or desires what is in accordance with the claims of the divine law, in connection with his suretiship for the sinner. His intercession forms a part of that stupendous system which is to fill the world with purity and happiness, and bring eternal glory to the Most High.

2. *It is tender and affectionate.* His bowels yearn over the perishing. His heart is full of tenderest pity and love. He can feel compassionately for the wretched sons of Adam. His pleadings, therefore, are always distinguished by the most rich emotions of goodness and love. No friend, or father, or mother, could ever feel such compassion as glows within his infinitely affectionate bosom.

3. *It is faithful and constant.* The interests of souls are never neglected or forgotten. He does not appear occasionally, but always in the presence of God for us. His immutable fidelity characterizes his intercession. Christ intercedes,

(1.) That the persons and services of his people may be accepted of God. Only in him are we accepted. He is the way both for our personal acceptance and also for the favorable reception of all our exercises and duties, Eph. i. 6; Ps. lxxxiv. 8; especially see Rev. viii. 3, 4.

(2.) That sin may be forgiven, and the blessings of holiness imparted. "If any man sin, we have an advocate," &c. 1 John ii. 1.

(3.) He prays for the preservation and sanctification of his people. This he did for Simon in the days of his flesh, Luke xxii. 31; John xvii. 11, &c. It is also probable that he meets the accusations and charges of the adversary against his people. See Rom. viii. 33; Zech. iii. 2–4.

(4.) He prays for their final and everlasting glorification. That they may be perfected in holiness, and then that they may be where he is, to behold and participate in his glory. So that Christ's intercession includes our best interests, both in this world and in that which is to come. Observe,

III. The objects of his intercession. His intercession is not presented on behalf of particular individuals, or select nations, but for the human race. His intercession has chiefly reference to his own people, those who love and obey him, but it is not clear that it certainly excludes the unconverted. He prayed on earth for all who should hereafter believe, and who of course were then not united with his disciples. But his intercession is limited to this life, and embraces neither saints nor sinners who have entered the eternal state. All who come to God exercising faith in the Lord Jesus are most assuredly the objects of his intercession. Observe,

IV. Its perpetuity. It will evidently be coeval with his mediatorial kingdom. The text says, "he ever liveth." The priests of old did not continue by reason of death. But Christ abideth forever, therefore his intercession is continued from age to age, without omission or interruption, and will be successfully exercised until the last ransomed spirit shall be brought to his joy and eternal glory.

APPLICATION.

1. *The subject is full of consolation to the righteous.* To have such a friend—brother—intercessor. One of such dignity—knowledge—power, and love, ever making our cause his own, and advocating all our interests in the heavenly state.

2. *We see how we can come to God acceptably.* He is the way. The advocate; the one and only Mediator.

3. *Thus our feeble services are well-pleasing to the Father.* In all duties, worship, &c., let us not forget this, and let this be the ground of our hope.

4. *Live in the expectation of enjoying all that Christ asks, throughout eternity.*

THE IMMEASURABLENESS OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."—EPHESIANS iii. 19.

OUR text is part of a prayer offered by Paul on behalf of the Ephesian church. Its richness, sublimity, and comprehensiveness, make it one of the most striking passages in the writings of that distinguished apostle, ver. 14 to 19. You will at once see that there is nothing in the subject to limit it to the Christians at Ephesus. Every minister of the gospel would desire this on behalf of his people, and every Christian should earnestly long for this on behalf of himself. "To know the love of Christ." Let us advert,

I. TO THE SURPASSING LOVE OF CHRIST.

II. TO THAT KNOWLEDGE OF IT WE SHOULD BE ANXIOUS TO ATTAIN. "To know," &c.

I. TO THE SURPASSING LOVE OF CHRIST. Every thing connected with Christ is great and extraordinary. His twofold nature—his glorious person—his divine perfections—his wondrous offices—his peerless titles—his amazing work, and his eternal immutability. But the subject of the text is his surpassing love. "The love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." That is, in all its greatness and comprehensiveness, &c. Like the sun we may enjoy its light and heat, yet all its magnificence, and glory, and power, has never been set forth: or as the ocean which may be extensively known in the various shores by which it is surrounded, but which in its hidden depths and mysterious phenomena will remain a profound secret until the last day. Now the love of Christ in all its greatness and infinity is beyond the searching out of created minds, and none can ever know it to perfection. It surpasses all our thoughts and range of knowledge,

1. *In the eternity of its origin.* When did it first move in the heart of the Son of God? The scriptures only record events as far back as the creation of our world; with that the love of Christ is evidently coeval. But there is one truly sublime passage which leads us back long ere God brought our world into being, Prov. viii. 23–31. Here then we have the compassionate regards of Christ delighting his spirit in those depths of unmeasured duration which were antecedent to the existence of our earth. "It surpasseth," &c.

2. *In the undeserving character of its objects.* Let this be fully considered. Try it even with finite love. Can you conceive of an intellectual person, of pure and lofty morals, of a strong, righteous precision of judgment, compassionating a creature of unmixed vileness, of self-procured misery of deepest hate and malignity of spirit, and one who sought no elevation, desired no mercy, and cared for no deliverance. Yet the reality of this picture is far more striking. Think of the high and lofty One, clad in purity, of infinite equity and truth, yet fixing his regards on a self-ruined and totally polluted creation.

> "He saw us ruin'd in the fall,
> Yet loved us notwithstanding all."

Notwithstanding there were countless reasons for not loving us, &c. "It surpasseth," &c.

3. *In the immensity of its cost.* The love of God to us is free, gratuitous, but what did it cost the Saviour? His temporary abdication of the celestial throne—his descent from heaven—his advent into our world—his assumption of our nature—his deep humiliation and abasement in the flesh—his heart's deepest sorrows and heaviest griefs—his life—his blood—the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And with that the inexplicable travail of his soul. The immolation of his spirit on the altar of eternal justice. The gift of his entire self. To be the ransom—the sacrifice!! Well may we exclaim,

> "Amazing love, how can it be,
> That thou, my Lord, shouldst die for me!"

4. *In the comprehensiveness of its extent.* The apostle refers to the extent in four respects:—

Its breadth, comprising in its range the whole world and every creature. "For Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man."

Its length, reaching from eternity to eternity. The stream took its rise in the ages of eternity, flowed into our world in the first promise, has increased in magnitude, it has rolled parallel with succeeding ages, and will lose itself in the ocean of that eternity before us.

Its depth is to be measured only by the unknown depths of sin, and the still deeper

misery from which it has redeemed us. None too low for its embrace, even brands from the burning.

Its height is that of the glories of the beatific vision. The celestial dignity and elevation of the glorified who have washed their robes and made them white, &c. Such then, briefly, is the surpassing love of Christ. Notice,

II. To THAT KNOWLEDGE OF IT WE SHOULD BE ANXIOUS TO ATTAIN. We should seek,

1. *A gracious personal knowledge of it.* A theoretical scriptural knowledge is very important, but the apostle in one fragment of a sentence has exhibited that which we should covet, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Now no person in his natural state can experimentally say this. We can say it when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, &c. When we have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

2. *To know it in its influences on our own hearts.* The love of Christ is a vehement principle—an exciting, constraining principle. It cannot be inoperative, "We love him," &c. And this love will breathe the atmosphere of peace, and be followed by joy. "Whom having not seen, ye love, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice," &c.

3. *To know it in the holy fruits of our lives.* This love begets love. And love to Christ will trust in Christ—honor Christ—obey Christ—deny the world and forsake sin for Christ—surrender all to Christ.

> "Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my life, my soul, my all."

4. *To know it by an increasing experimental knowledge.* To know it more clearly—fully—sweetly,—to know it more in its sway over our hearts and souls. To the attainment of this knowledge,

(1.) Greater regard to the scriptures is necessary. Here this love is detailed—here it is set forth—here are the counsels, purposes, promises, and ratifications of his love. This is the golden mine; this the celestial atmosphere, &c.

(2.) Closer communion is necessary. Spiritual intimacy will invariably increase it. Distant from Christ, and this knowledge cannot thrive. By speaking to Christ—by meditating on Christ—by setting him before us, we shall increase in the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

(3.) More fervent prayer is necessary, "If any man lack," &c. Paul thus prayed for the Ephesians. God the Father honored Christ most generally when Christ was in the act of prayer. So it was at his baptism. On the mount, and when he prayed, "Glorify thy name," and the voice said, "I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again," John xii. 28.

(4.) Greater zeal for his glory is necessary. Those who honor Christ he will honor, and he has engaged that he will come unto them, and manifest himself unto them, &c. When the heart and life are fully devoted to Christ, the soul shall be greatly enlarged in the knowledge and love of Jesus.

APPLICATION.

1. *This knowledge of the love of Christ is essential.* No salvation without it.

2. *The gospel reveals this knowledge.* Oh read and listen to that revelation. Here the tree of knowledge grows.

3. *Ignorance of the love of Christ will be the soul's eternal ruin.*

CHRIST THE ONLY SOURCE OF ETERNAL LIFE.

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."—JOHN vi. 68.

MANY who had listened hopefully to Christ's teaching became offended with him, and abandoned his instructions, verse 65, 66. Then Jesus addressed the twelve and said, "Will ye also go away?" &c. Christ put this to see how they were affected by the conduct of the others—persons often act as those around, without reflection, &c. To this interrogation Peter replies "Lord, to whom," &c. Observe,

I. THE GREAT OBJECT CONTEMPLATED—"Eternal life."

II. AN IMPORTANT QUESTION PROPOSED—"To whom shall," &c.

III. A GLORIOUS TRUTH ASSERTED—"Thou hast the words of eternal life," &c.

I. THE GREAT OBJECT CONTEMPLATED—"Eternal life." What is eternal life? The existence of the soul and body in a state of felicity forever and ever.

1. *The future existence of the soul.* That it will not die with the body, not be destroyed, nor sleep, but live, and act, and

enjoy—enter upon another world, the region of the blessed—ascend to God, be with the Lord, &c. How supremely important is this, to have a hope of it, to be preparing for it, living for it, seeking it, so as to make the language of the apostle ours, "To live is Christ," &c., to have the portion of Lazarus after he died, "He was carried," &c.

2. *The resurrection of the body.* This was but faintly understood by the Jews, never guessed at by the heathen—Paul at Athens. This is revealed in the scriptures. The ashes we commit to the earth will rise again, not one grain of human dust shall perish. The trumpet shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, in the morning, with glory, to everlasting honor; then shall the soul re-inhabit the body, and enjoy,

3. *Everlasting felicity.* The happiness of the saints is not complete till this,—this is the consummation. Then God's presence and glory shall be enjoyed, eternal worship celebrated, eternal bliss possessed. "In thy presence is fulness of joy," &c. "They shall obtain joy," &c.

II. AN IMPORTANT QUESTION PROPOSED. "To whom shall," &c. It supposes the subject to be entertained, &c., that it is deeply interesting. What can be so much so?—all other subjects poor and worthless compared. To whom?

1. *Shall we have recourse to nature?* The works of the great Creator are resplendent with glory, they are vocal with the praise of their great Artificer, "The heavens declare," &c. Speak of the soul, of guilt, of pardon, of glory, all silent. Ask of immortality, of the resurrection, of eternal blessedness, all is silent, no return is made, &c.

2. *Shall we have recourse to infidelity?* Why, that either denies or doubts of a future state, it mutters indistinctly about annihilation, it puts out the light of revelation, laughs at the hopes of the Christian, professes to sport with death, judgment, and a future world. Here all is repulsive, chilling, and wretched.

3. *Shall we avail ourselves of Judaism?* Here is indeed the region of truth, but its discoveries are imperfect, but the dawn of the day; we linger here waiting for the light of the morning; we are surrounded with types, and sacrifices, and mysteries; we are alarmed too with the awful splendor and thunderings of Sinai, until we exceedingly fear and quake.

4. *Shall we go to morality?* The morals of the Bible are to be the rule of life to the Christian. But do they contain eternal life? will the keeping one, or any, or all, ensure my salvation? can I escape the punishment of past sin? will works of righteousness avail me? God speaks and says, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living," &c.

5. *Shall we go to profession and religious observances?* Will the name, the form, the routine, the service? will baptism? will the Lord's Supper? will an evangelical creed? &c. The kingdom of God is not here or there, but within you—no promise of eternal life attached to these.

6. *Shall we seek it by penance, or mortification, by alms?* &c. Will God be propitious through these? Will fastings, tears, groans, mortifications? What says the scripture? Can we find eternal life anywhere connected with these? One oblation of all the mere animal creation would not suffice.

> "Rivers of oil, and seas of blood,
> Alas, they all must flow in vain."

We come again to the text, and consider,

III. THE GLORIOUS TRUTH ASSERTED. "Thou hast," &c. That is Christ, and we add, Christ only. We observe,

1. *In his lips is the promise of eternal life.* He came to reveal, publish, offer, urge, &c. "I am come," &c. "If any man thirst," &c. "I give unto my sheep," &c.

2. *In his blood is the price of eternal life.* By his sacrifice and death he obtained eternal redemption for us, he laid down his life for his sheep, he suffered the just, &c.

3. *In his hands is the gift of eternal life.* He cancels guilt, he raises to life, "I am the resurrection and the life, whoso believeth," &c.—"God hath given eternal life," &c.—"He is exalted a prince and a Saviour," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Who has fled to Christ?* Received his words, trusted in his death, received the gift. The Spirit within you is the great and sure earnest.

2. *Go not to other sources.* Life, life, eternal life is in Christ. Believe this and obtain it, seek it and live.

3. *Forsake not Christ, you who know his name.* Reply to every tempter, "To whom," &c.

CHRIST THE FIRST AND THE LAST.

(PREACHED ON THE LAST LORD'S DAY OF THE YEAR.)

"I am Alpha and Omega."—Rev. i. 11.

John was the only disciple and apostle of the Saviour who did not suffer a violent death for his Master's sake. He did not, however, escape the persecution and opposition of the world. In old age he became an exile, and was banished to the island of Patmos for his faithful adherence to his Lord and Master. In that desolate island were revealed to him the sublime and splendid visions of this wondrous book. God made Patmos the ante-room of glory, the vestibule of heaven. Christ revealed himself to John in his divine uncreated majesty and grandeur, see ver. 9, 10, &c. Christ, the great theme of the Christian ministry—the life and glory of all evangelical preaching—what subject so suited to the last day of another year, as the dignified announcement, "I am Alpha," &c. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, therefore they denote the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Of course they signify both the priority and supremacy of the Redeemer. If Christ claimed this appellation, and had a just right to do so, then his divinity is at once a settled truth. It is clear that Christ is the speaker, see verses 13 and 18. The text is applicable,

I. To the universe of God. Of course I include the entire creation—angels, mankind, the animal creation, and the material world. Of the whole he is the Alpha—he created all things by the word of his power—"Without him was not any thing made." The apostle specifies things both in heaven and earth, &c. Col. i. 16; he gave existence to the whole; fashioned, beautified, arranged, &c., the whole. Of the whole, he is the Omega—the end as well as the source. For his pleasure they were created; his glory the great end. By him and for him, see Rom. xi. 36; Heb. ii. 10. Now Christ has universal rule and authority; will make all things and all events subservient to his will and glory; for by him all things consist, and he upholdeth all things by the word of his power. How grand and sublime the idea, that Christ, the Saviour of the world, is the Alpha and Omega of the entire universe, and doubtless will eventually receive the homage of the whole! The text is applicable,

II. To the grand scheme of redemption. The purpose of salvation was in Christ—the arrangement was the result of his infinite wisdom—his eye saw, and his bowels yearned—his heart moved—his arm brought salvation. Trace the stream of mercy, and it takes its rise in the infinite depths of his compassion. Trace the ray of hope, and it is found emanating from the Sun of Righteousness, &c. Angels were spectators; cherubim, &c., heard the announcement, but Christ alone was the Alpha, &c. So also, is he equally the Omega. Salvation refers to him—he is the end of it—the display of his holiness and justice—the exhibition of his righteousness—the transcendent display of his love—the entire revenue of honor and glory return to him—the redeemed are brought to God—the anthems all refer to God—the wise and benevolent designs of God will be consummated in the final completion of the work of redemption. In this there are no co-sharers, no compeers, Christ is the Alpha and Omega. It also applies,

III. To the volume of inspiration. Here Christ is the Alpha, &c. It is true in the most literal sense of the term. The volume opens with the displays of his creative power and glory—the Logos creating the world, &c.; giving nature her laws, revealing the tenure of man's felicity, &c.; passing sentence; revealing the promise of mercy, &c. Take the whole volume, it is the word of Christ. Look at the laws, and rites, and ceremonies, all prefiguring the Redeemer. The prophecies, &c. The gospel narratives. The Acts. The epistles. The revelation of John; how truly he ends the sacred book, "The grace of our Lord," &c. Our chief view, in reading and meditating on the word, should be to find Christ, to hear his voice, behold his glory, and be conformed to his image. We shall find many illustrious names in its pages, some bearing very prominent positions, but Christ only is the Alpha and Omega. The subject is applicable,

IV. To the church. Here Christ is also the Alpha and Omega. The church is Christ's kingdom—his temple—his spiritual house—his mystical body—the purchase of his blood—his ransomed flock—his elect host—his sacred army. He founded it, and is its blessed basis. It derives all life, and vigor, and purity from him; he sustains it; "the government," &c.; be-

cause he lives, his people live also. He will be its Omega; by it, he will be glorified and admired, &c., forever and ever. The church has had its apostles, evangelists, pastors, witnesses, confessors, and army of martyrs, but Christ only is its Alpha and Omega. The subject applies,

V. To the spiritual life of the Christian. In your calling, justification, conversion, holiness, &c., joy, comfort, hope, all from Christ as the Alpha. In faith, hope, obedience, love, devotedness, and praise, all to him as the Omega. "The author and finisher of our faith." "Lord, save me," is the prayer of the penitent. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," is the prayer of the dying Christian. This subject is applicable,

VI. To the felicity and glory of heaven. Countless sources of happiness and dignity there; knowledge, purity, rest, communion with all the holy, &c.; but Christ is the Alpha and Omega. He gives admission into the celestial city. He gives the crown. He is the grand object of the beatific vision, "See him as he is." He is the subject of the song. His favor and smile will constitute the happiness of that bright world forever. In heaven he will ever be the Omega, and his eternity will be the date and duration of all its blessedness.

APPLICATION.

1. *What think ye of Christ?* In what estimation do you hold him? What kind of service do you render? What enjoyments derive from him? What improvement in the knowledge, &c., of Christ during the past year?

2. *What madness to reject Christ!* To close the eyes upon the sun—to reject the air—the flowing stream—the staff of life—would be wiser than to reject Christ.

ON THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS.

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."—James v. 19, 20.

The text refers, doubtless, to the regaining of a backsliding brother: one who has run well, but has turned aside from the way of righteousness. Hence the expression, "err from the truth." At an early period errors crept into the church of Christ. Some of these were fearful in their influence. Errors as to Christ's Deity, errors as to Christian obedience, errors as to the simplicity of the gospel, &c. There were many false teachers, and these drew the unstable from the purity and obedience of the truth. It was the duty of the pious to endeavor to regain such, to bring them back, &c. We see how Paul labored for the restoration of the Galatians, &c. But the text is capable of a more extended application. We may justly refer it to the duty of the Christian church to endeavor to convert sinners in general. Let us look at it in the extensive and general sense.

I. What is included in the conversion of the soul?

II. What can we do towards effecting it?

III. The motives which should influence us to attempt it.

I. What is included in the conversion of the soul? To convert signifies to change, to turn round about. Now this may apply to our views, our feelings, our state, and our conduct. In conversion there is,

1. *A change in our views.* Things are viewed through a new medium, and their aspect is entirely altered. Now a converted person sees *himself*, his conduct, and deserts, as he did not before. He sees sin in its true nature—he sees God in a new character—he views the Saviour, religion, time, and eternity, differently. What he considered light, he now calls darkness—wisdom he now calls folly—good he now calls evil. Just as by looking through certain optical instruments the figures are reversed, so to those converted to God.

2. *A change in our feelings.* It has to do with the heart and all its passions—love, hatred, desire, delight, &c. His soul now loathes his former enjoyments; his former sweets are now as gall and wormwood. He feels differently towards the world and sin, towards the pious, and especially towards the blessed God. "Old things," &c.

3. *A change in our state.* Once in the world—now in the church; once in the broad way—now in the narrow, &c.; a captive—now free; enemy—now a friend; condemned—now justified, and accepted of God. A child—an heir of eternal life.

4. *A change in conduct.* The actions of the life are now counter to what they were. He was prayerless—now he prays; presumptuous—now he fears, &c.; indifferent—now solicitous; disobedient—now from the heart he serves God. He was the slave of Satan, and had the fruit of shame, &c.; now the servant of God, and the fruit of righteousness, &c.

II. WHAT CAN WE DO TOWARDS EFFECTING IT? Now, I mean Christians; not merely ministers, but all who love and know Christ. Now, we cannot illumine the mind with spiritual understanding; we cannot change the will; we cannot wash the spiritual blackamoor white. God must renew, and renovate, and give a new nature, &c. But we can,

1. *Give important spiritual instruction.* Explain and rehearse what we know of religion. Christian knowledge is important. "Go and tell what things the Lord," &c. The disciples were scattered abroad, and went everywhere preaching and teaching the Lord Jesus.

2. *We can employ Christian entreaty and persuasion.* We can persuade them, perhaps, to abandon evil habits—to attend the house of God—to read the Bible—to consider their ways, &c. How many have thus been drawn to Christ by the affectionate kindness of believers!

3. *We can exhibit the characteristics of true piety.* The apostle speaks of persons being won by the conversation of the pious. Our light must shine—the savor of piety be perceived—the fragrance emitted—the spirit diffused abroad. Now this always impresses—always moves. Then we can,

4. *Connect fervent prayer with the whole.* Seek God's special blessing—implore his help—intercede for souls—lay their conduct to heart—travail in birth—be very anxious for it. This will please God, secure his blessing, &c. None ever did so in vain.

III. THE MOTIVES THAT SHOULD INFLUENCE US TO ATTEMPT IT.

1. *There is the possibility of being successful.* It has been done. The text supposes it possible. How great and desirable is such an achievement!

2. *There is the obligation laid upon us.* Obligation of Christ's constraining love; obligation of the Spirit of God within us; obligation of our own consciences; obligation from what others did for us, especially what Christ has done. "Then I will tell," &c.

3. *We shall obliterate a multitude of sins.* Cause them to be blotted out. Cast as a stone, &c. Trains of evil stayed—plague arrested—curse a blessing, &c. Besides,

4. *Rescue a soul from perdition.* Death—the sentence—the doom—the misery. Everlasting death—devouring flames—eternal burnings, &c. Oh! the felicity of this when we die—appear before God's bar—through all eternity.

APPLICATION.

1. *What reason for self-reproaches!* We are verily guilty, &c. All, every one, &c.

2. *Let us awake to diligence, &c.* Now let bowels of mercy constrain, &c.

3. *Exhortation to the unconverted.* Oh be wise, &c. In this your day, &c.

ON WINNING SOULS.

"He that winneth souls is wise."—PROV. xi. 30

OUR text directs us to the human soul—the last and great work of God's creative power and goodness. When the earth and the heavens, the sea and the dry land, with their numberless animated creatures, had been formed, then Deity, as the climax of his omnific manifestation, stepped forth and said, "Let us make man;" and it is recorded, that in his own likeness created he him. The soul's exalted similitude to God's holy image is its highest honor, and this invests it with a glory and a worth which vastly transcend all terrestrial things. But alas! the soul of man can only now be contemplated amid its eclipsed glory and moral ruin. By sin it apostatized and became a wreck. The crown has fallen from its head. Ichabod is now written upon it—the glory is departed. To restore the soul to dignity, holiness, and heaven, is the great design of the plan of redemption. God, in the infinity of his grace and love, has become the help of ruined man; has set up a plan of reconciliation whence holiness, justice, and truth may harmonize with clemency, mercy, and love, in its salvation. The great remedy is revealed in the gospel. The way of recovery is there clearly pointed out, and God has set up in his church the Christian ministry in connection with the pious influence

of his people, for the conversion of sinners to himself. Notice,

I. The means to be adopted for winning souls.

II. On whom the responsibility devolves. And,

III. The wisdom of faithfully discharging that responsibility.

I. The means to be adopted for winning souls. Now, if we consider some of the circumstances in which the soul is placed, and the influence which may be exerted upon it, we shall then clearly perceive what must be done to win souls. We remark,

1. *The soul is in darkness, and must be won by the communication of knowledge.*

Man in his revolted condition is in the kingdom of Satan, and that is the kingdom of darkness. Man is represented as being blind—blinded by sin and the power of the destroyer. Now this darkness, or ignorance, is the blight of the soul—its degradation, its misery, its destruction. "For the soul to be without knowledge," &c. "My people perish for lack," &c. To win the soul we must enlighten it—the light of truth must arise upon it—the scales must be taken from the eyes. Man's ruin and help must be detailed—the lamp of heavenly knowledge must be held up to the soul.

2. *The soul is in moral thraldom, and the message of deliverance must be proclaimed.* The gospel is a message of liberty. It calls to liberty—it proclaims freedom to those who are bound. "Ye shall know the truth," &c. The gospel dispensation is the year of jubilee—the year of release, and announces liberty to the captive.

3. *The soul is under the power of evil, and Christian influence must be employed to dispossess it.* Hence it must be reproved—warned—exhorted—expostulated with—allured. The soul has fears, and these must be aroused; hopes, and these must be addressed; desires, and these must be directed. Piety has a fourfold influence to exert on men for their good.

(1.) The influence of integrity. An upright conduct—unblameable demeanor—purity of conversation. This will do much.

(2.) The influence of goodness or benevolence. The Saviour's heart and mind. Love ennobling, reigning, influencing, &c. It is difficult to resist this.

(3.) The influence of holy cheerfulness. An evident exhibition of the bright radiant influences of true religion on the soul. Melancholy cannot attract—it is the cloud, the desert; but holy joy is the sunshine, and the verdant scene.

(4.) The influence of kind persuasion. "Come with us, and we will do you good," &c. Affectionate invitation will often do very much.

4. *The soul is incapable of self-restoration, and therefore we must pray for the Holy Ghost to render all other means efficient* Men may hear and understand the gospel—receive or reject it—be greatly influenced by Christian example; but the soul must be renewed by the Spirit of God. He takes away the heart of stone, &c. He translates, &c. from darkness, &c. Thus Paul, "Brethren, my heart's desire, and prayer to God is, that Israel," &c. "The effectual fervent prayer," &c. Prayer and supplication are to be made for all men, &c. Let us labor to save souls, as if all depended on our exertions, and then pray. as if God did it alone and immediately.

II. On whom does the work of winning souls devolve? It devolves pre-eminently on the Christian ministry. They are called, and qualified, and sent out for this great purpose. But it also devolves upon all Christians to make the effort. On parents, as did Abraham, Joshua, David, &c.; on sabbath school teachers and tract distributors, &c.; in one word, on all the disciples of Jesus. Their name Christian, like Christ; their calling, to shine, &c.; their desire, to do good, &c.; their talents. however few, &c. Let us notice,

III. The wisdom of faithfully discharging that responsibility. "He that winneth souls," &c. Now, the wisdom of winning souls will appear if you consider,

1. *The value of that which is won.* Who can describe its worth? A city—a kingdom—a world, is as nothing in the scale. He who never erred, has proposed this mighty interrogation, "What shall it profit a man," &c. To win souls is, therefore, the highest wisdom, the most noble of all attainments.

2. *The dignity of those with whom we co-operate.* We move in the same train, and labor with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, &c. They lived, and sung, and toiled, and died, to win souls. We are fellow-workers with angels, for their history is connected

with that of redemption; they are also ministering spirits, &c. We are acting in unison with the blessed Deity. God was not so glorious, and great, and blessed in creating the world as in redeeming it. His Son, in all the mystery of the incarnation —the depths of his humiliation—intensity of his sorrow and ignominy—the agony of his death, had but one end, to win souls. For this all the arrangements of Providence progress, and will be consummated. The songs of the ransomed will have respect to this, &c. Is it not wise, &c.

3. *The bliss enjoyed by the soul through eternity.* Follow the spirit, &c. into the regions of a blissful immortality. Contemplate its dignity, and joy, and glory, as beatified. Entered on a state of boundless felicity. "In thy presence is fulness of joy," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Who are engaged in the work?* Be constant—active—persevering—devoted. The day of recompense will come. "Be faithful unto death," &c.

2. *Who will now consecrate their services to the Lord?* What say you, ye young—ye strong—ye with time, &c.

3. *How many here, are yet strangers to Christ?*

THE MINISTRY OF SALVATION.

"Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."—1 Cor. x. 33.

The text is the declaration of the apostle as to the course he pursued in fulfilling the responsible work of the ministry, verse 32. The end of his ministry he specifies in the text, "that they may be saved," &c.

I. The nature of that salvation which the gospel contemplates.

II. The responsibility of the Christian ministry to make known the means by which this salvation may be secured.

I. The nature of that salvation which the gospel contemplates. What is it to be saved? It signifies to be delivered—to be delivered from that sinful perishing state in which we are involved by nature. Look at that state in its guilt—in its depravity—in its peril.

1. *To be saved is to be pardoned.* It changes the condition—debt cancelled—cloud blotted out—charges erased. Pardon is *promised*, published, and urged in the gospel. This is the foundation of acceptable piety, to be pronounced righteous by justifying grace. "Thy sins are forgiven," &c. To be saved is,

2. *For the mind and heart to be renewed.* Pardon does not in itself alter the feelings and desires. The depravity is so deep, so entire, so universal, that the heart cannot be repaired, or merely improved—amended; it must be totally changed—born again —renewed. All old things must pass away. The heart of stone must, &c. God's nature, spirit, and mind imparted.

3. *To be saved is for the soul to be rescued from its peril.* The frown of God—the wrath of the Holy One—the sentence of death—and hell itself. When God forgives, his anger passes away; no longer under wrath, but favor—delivered from the wrath to come—now a title to everlasting life—names written in heaven—after death, eternal glory—saved into God's family on earth, and into heaven forever.

II. The responsibility of the Christian ministry to make known the means by which this salvation may be secured.

1. *The gospel must be declared, as containing the only way of salvation.* Without this all is darkness—mist—confusion. Not another book in the universe. Ten thousand subjects may be taught, &c., but this nowhere else. Word of salvation. Neither science nor literature can aid us—gospel the only record of mercy.

2. *Jesus must be published as the only deliverer.* No other has the office, nor the ability. Prophets to teach—priests to offer sacrifice—holy men to counsel—angels to minister—but Christ only to save. Stands forth as the sun in the heavens—to all generations, ages, and countries.

3. *Repentance and faith as the appointed means.* They are essentially so—they are necessary to it. Eyes opened—ears unstopped—hearts converted—mind changed —heart penitent, and mercy longed for. Then faith—seeking, finding, resting on Christ. Faith before the cross—before the throne.

4. *Obedience of heart and life as the evidence of salvation.* Not the cause, but the effect—not the root, but the fruit—not the foundation, but the superstructure. Cheerful, willing, entire obedience.

APPLICATION.

1. Have we so preached?
2. Have you so heard?
3. This is the design of the true gospel.
4. We offer it to each and all.

MINISTERIAL ARDOR.

"For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause."—2 Cor. v. 13.

We are always compelled to regard conduct which is peculiarly striking and prominent. Even the eccentricities of men turn for a time public attention towards them. But where there is displayed great decision of principle, great energy of action, and great disinterestedness of motive, our attention is then excited in a peculiar manner. If we do not approve of the object, we give involuntary homage to men when there is honesty of purpose with nobleness and vehemence of spirit. The worst that we venture to say is, that he may be a fanatic or an enthusiast, but still withal he may be an honest, well-meaning person. Now, to the eyes of both Jews and Greeks, the apostles were just such persons. They were deemed mad with religious enthusiasm, and to this the apostle refers in the text. As Christians we approve, commend, and rejoice in the spirit and labors of the apostles; but if so, should we not imitate them—imbibe their spirit—breathe their devotedness—exemplify their toil and self-denial? In one word, should we not exhibit the utmost determination and vehemence of spirit in diffusing the gospel through the world? We affirm, then, that the cause of Jesus warrants the employment of our utmost energies and powers, even though we are exposed to the charge of being beside ourselves. Let us establish and illustrate this. For proof we refer,

I. To the magnitude of our object. This object is of the highest importance. It is the elevation of human beings to moral dignity, purity, and salvation—lifting up immortal souls from the verge of the pit to the highest enjoyment of celestial grandeur and blessedness. Look at the depraved condition of the human race, especially of the heathen. The mind dark as midnight; spirit spell-bound by superstition; heart callous with relentless cruelty; life one of torture, distraction, horror, wretchedness, and followed by a death of despair. Think of the transformations we seek. Light, liberty, purity, peace, hope, immortality, heaven. What compared with this is mere civilization—national independence—mental culture—earthly prosperity—scientific discovery, &c. Here is the concentration of the glorious, the blessed, the sublime. We refer,

II. To the vastness of our sphere. Even as in ancient days, we may affirm "that the field is the world." Take a map of the world, or a terrestrial globe, and look at the vastness of our sphere. You traverse whole regions of the world, where nothing but darkness and misery reign—China, India, Egypt, Persia, Turkey, South America; visit the almost brutalized inhabitants of the northern regions; the aboriginal savages of Africa, &c. In turning round the globe, you see Britain, and parts of America, and here and there an island, where they have the gospel; but the mass are perishing for lack of knowledge. The world lieth under the rule of the wicked one. Will feeble or tame efforts do any thing to evangelize this sphere? to illumine these hundreds of millions? to convert these myriads upon myriads? If every Christian were wholly devoted either to teach or preach; if every believer were consecrated entirely to the work, so vast is it, so immense, that our means would scarcely be commensurate to it. A few hundreds of nets are all that are employed to drag this fathomless ocean of its perishing millions. In vindication of the highest zeal we refer,

III. To the grandeur of our subject. To effect the glorious end contemplated, what are our means? what the instrumentality we design to employ? We answer, the glorious gospel of the blessed God—by the cross of Christ. We purpose no invasion by powerful armies; we shall send no vessels of war; no legislative statutes enforced at the point of the bayonet, or the mouth of the cannon. We have arms, but they are the sword of the Spirit—the invincible weapons of truth—the banner of the cross—the standard of mercy—the streamers of peace. Our trumpet sounds to deeds of mercy and love. Simply we carry the gospel of salvation, and preach it to the people. Tell of the Nazarene—his

life, death, resurrection, &c. Invite them to be reconciled to God. Cry out to them, "Behold the Lamb of God," &c. Is not our subject as simple, beautiful, yet mighty, as the light of heaven? The melodious angelic song comprises it, "Glory to God in the highest," &c. But will this message effect the great work? We refer,

IV. To the triumphant achievements of the past. Shall we appeal to the history of the gospel in its early or later days? We appeal to its origin. This gospel was preached in Jerusalem, the city of Christ's death—the place crimsoned with his blood; preached by fishermen, &c. See the marvellous results—the conviction and conversion of three thousand under one sermon. Afterwards the number is increased to five thousand. The disciples go forth to other places. They visit Corinth, the most sensual city of the age; Athens, the most renowned for its multifarious gods; Ephesus, where the splendid temple of Diana shone forth in its seducing grandeur; Rome, the imperial city of the world; and everywhere, by the preaching of the cross, souls are converted to the Christian faith, and to the lofty virtues of evangelical morality. Let us now, by one striking transit, come to modern times. Men imbued with the same spirit, yet not possessed of miraculous powers, carry the same gospel to India, and there it breaks down caste, and even proud Brahmins become children in the school of Christ. They carry it to the wilds of Africa—the filthy Hottentots become civil, intelligent, and holy; to the cannibals of the South Seas, and there a nation is born in a day. Say, then, if the highest zeal is not wisely expended in this great cause? We advert,

V. To the aspect of the present times. In all parts of the world missions have to some extent succeeded; but the present aspect of things should excite to the most devoted zeal. The established character of some missions—the great success of others—the opening of new doors of amazing extent—the increased ratio of success in most stations—when caste is broken—when a few dare to do the deed—when native preachers are being raised up, we then seem to have reached the crisis when we may expect to storm the citadel itself. Drops shall be succeeded by showers, and "the little one shall," &c.

VI. To the predicted glories of the future. We are not engaged in a matter of uncertainty; we have the revealed will of God assuring us of the certainty of success. His word shall not return, &c. "It shall accomplish," &c. Hear the glorious declaration of Deity, "For the earth shall be filled," &c. "I will bring my sons," &c. "He will say to the north," &c. "All flesh shall see the salvation of God," &c. "He shall be praised from the rising," &c. Hear Jehovah's most absolute asseveration: "But as truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Here then we sow in hope and plough in hope—preach in hope—instruct in hope—pray in hope—believe in hope—give our donations in hope, &c. With such prophecies and promises can we be too ardent and zealous?

VII. To the limitation of our opportunities. To attempt these sublime objects—to combat this world of evil—to attempt the rescue of these deathless spirits, we have only the short space of a transitory existence. We might well seek antediluvian lives to labor. A *survey* seems enough for our short breath of existence. If we do any thing, there must be devoted, ardent, zealous effort. "Whatever thy hand," &c. "Work while it is called day." This is echoed back from the tombs of past generations—the tombs of the slain warriors in this hallowed cause; from the tombs of Coke, and Elliot, and Carey; from the tombs of Mrs. Winslow and Mrs. Judson. "Work while it is called day," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Are we anxious and earnest in the missionary work?

2. Who will be so from this hour?

3. Seek for yourselves what you send to others.

NEUTRALITY IMPOSSIBLE.

"He that is not with me is against me."—Matt xii. 30.

Christ was the most faithful, yet the most tender of all preachers. These were combined in all his addresses. He never failed to pity, yet he also never failed to exhibit the truth to the consciences of his

hearers. Having delivered the most soul-searching discourse to the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, he concludes it with tears, and laments the doom which they might have averted. Surely it should be our constant aim to copy the perfect example of the great Teacher. We would entreat, and reason, and persuade. We would allure you by the precious promises—we would win by heaven's glories—we would attract by the influence of the cross; but if all this should fail—if you still hearken and do not believe—form a part of the public assembly and do not give your hearts to Christ—we then must warn you, and with all fidelity proclaim the language of Christ in your ears, "He that is not with me is against me," &c.

I. What is it to be with Christ? It includes several things.

1. *With him in the conclusions of our minds.* The carnal mind concludes very differently to Christ on almost every subject. We know Christ's views of the Father; we know his views of sin—of holiness—of time—of the soul—of eternity—of heaven—of hell. Are we like-minded with Christ—see objects through the same medium.

2. *With Christ in the affections of the soul.* What he loves do we supremely love? What he hates, &c. Do our hearts move with his? our desires with his? Does he in fact draw us after him? his jealousies—his hopes, &c. Now, if Christ's spirit be in us this will be the case.

3. *With Christ in the pursuits of life.* How did he live, and for what? Do we walk in the Lord Jesus? Do we set similar objects before us? aim at similar ends—labor for similar realizations—glory of God and the true good of human beings. He did all his Father's will and work.

4. *With Christ in the endearments of union and communion.* He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Christ in you the hope of glory. He manifests himself unto his people, &c. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," &c.

5. *With Christ in spiritual exercises and conflicts.* Resisting evil—overcoming the world—vanquishing the powers of darkness—praying and laboring against these—setting up and maintaining another kingdom. Are we his soldiers—valiant for the truth—confessing, adorning, and diffusing the truth of his gospel.

II. What is it to be against Christ Two classes:

1. *Those who are manifestly so.* Infidels—blasphemers—persecutors—scoffers—the profane and thoroughly worldly—neglecters of his word and ordinances. These need only be named. They have the name of their master in their foreheads; the livery of sin is manifest; their spirit and conversation are conclusive against them.

2. *Those who are not openly, yet who are really so.*

(1.) They who are half-hearted—have some love, some desires, some esteem; but it is not entire. Their hearts are divided—stand midway between the church and the world—follow Christ at a distance.

(2.) Those who are constantly hindered in carrying out their convictions. One is occupied with the worldly, and their salutations and tokens of favor bind him; another with business, and it absorbs—farm, merchandise, &c.; another, the affairs of the family; another, the fear of persecution; others who think secret attachment is sufficient, with Nicodemus.

3. *Those who rest in external observances.* Many pride themselves in their extensive knowledge—in their regular lives—in their attendance on means. How often Christ reasoned with them! "Not those who say, Lord, Lord," &c. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink," &c. Christ said to Nicodemus, a teacher, &c., "Ye must be born again."

III. Christ's conclusions as to those who are not with him. "They are against me." I recognise friends and enemies only—subjects and rebels—lovers and haters. He has no medium class—no medium state—no medium heaven. Now, you who would not be numbered with the enemies of Christ, just let us appeal,

1. *To reason.* Does not reason say you cannot be for two opponents? for light and darkness—sin and holiness—heaven and perdition. Does not reason say, with your views of Christ, you should give him your hearts?

2. *I appeal to conscience.* Your convictions, how often shaken. Under sermons—when reading the Bible—when sick—when at the funeral of a friend—when others have given themselves to Christ.

3. *I appeal to the cross of Christ.* Christ speaks. He says, I loved you, &c. I died for you; for your entire devotedness

to me. He shows his hands—his side; he groans, &c. Now, what are the claims of Christ? Your lips—your good-will—oh! surely yourselves:—

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

4. *I appeal to the day of judgment.* Christ is now enthroned. He sways the sceptre of the universe. All nations are before him. Behold an assembled world. The countless myriads are divided into four—five—six sections? Oh, no; but two—the righteous and the wicked—wise and foolish—friends and foes—saints and sinners. What surprise—what confusion—what horror! He exclaims to the disappointed and excluded, "He that is not with me is against me," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *How important to avoid self-deception!* "Do not err," &c. "Be not deceived," &c.

2. *Will not many resolve to be for Christ to-night?* You must cross the line of demarcation—you must be decided. Now record your vow; now decide—act, &c.

3. *What can be gained by being against Christ?* What honor? peace; happiness? What in life? What in death? What in eternity? Ask yourselves what?

REJECTERS AND RECEIVERS OF CHRIST CONTRASTED.

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."—JOHN i. 11, 12.

OUR present subject describes the reception Christ met with when he became incarnate, and made his advent into our world. He was in the world, and we may truly say, that for dignity and mental and moral grandeur the world had never had such a visitant. Yet, it knew him not; it gave him no deference; yielded him no homage or respect; it hailed him with no song of joy; it knew him not. But the former part of our text is still more marvellous, "He came unto his own," &c. Let us consider,

I. CHRIST'S REJECTION BY HIS OWN, AND ENDEAVOR TO ACCOUNT FOR IT. And,

II. CHRIST'S RECEPTION BY SOME, AND THE ADVANTAGES WHICH FOLLOWED.

I. CHRIST'S REJECTION BY HIS OWN, AND ENDEAVOR TO ACCOUNT FOR IT. "He came unto his own;" that is, to his own people, and nation, and land. The world's Messiah was to be of the seed of Abraham—of the tribe of Judah—of the royal line of David. He was also to come to their nation—the very city had been predicted in which he should be born. Bethlehem was to be the place of his nativity; he was to come at a specific time—before the sceptre should depart from Judah, or just at the time that regal power and authority should cease among them as a nation; and thus he came, and in every iota the prophecies received their exact accomplishment. More, the Jews were ardently expecting him; all the pious and devout had been waiting for him, and were particularly doing so at the time of his advent; yet, they "received him not;" in other words, they rejected him; they reviled his character—treated him with contempt and scorn—preferred a murderer to him—and at length, with wicked hands, put him to a cruel and shameful death. How surprising this conduct! How can it be accounted for? Not in any thing connected with Christ, for he was holy, blessed, and the very embodiment of every grace and virtue; but he became to the Jews a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence. It is written, They were offended in him. This arose partly from,

1. *Fixing their attention on one class of prophecies only.* Those which spake of his regal glory and conquests; and, interpreting these carnally, they seemed to be ignorant of those which described his humiliation, poverty, sufferings, &c.

2. *They were not prepared for a system of spiritual religion.* They were wedded to forms and rites; to their ritual, and temple, &c. Their cry was, "We are Abraham's children." "The temple of the Lord are we."

3. *They were filled with desires after worldly pomp and power.* They wished to be freed from the yoke of the Romans, &c. Wanted a Messiah who should have a kingdom of this world—have soldiers, &c.

4. *They were offended at the fidelity of Christ's teaching.* It was too direct—humiliating. It disrobed them of their cloaks of hypocrisy; it exposed their covetous

ness; it demanded a change of heart—a reformation of life—and holiness both of heart and life. It denounced their self-righteousness, and reproved their skepticism and perversion of their oracles; therefore they received him not. His teaching was luminous, heavenly, divine; but they received him not. His life was one of spotless purity, yet they, &c. His career was one of richest mercy, yet they, &c. His miracles were stupendous and all-gracious, yet they, &c. He was their own Messiah, yet they, &c. Observe, then,

II. CHRIST'S RECEPTION BY SOME, AND THE ADVANTAGES WHICH FOLLOWED. "But to as many," &c. A few did receive him, although the mass rejected him. Observe,

1. *These regarded and believed his message.* They heard, and understood, and were brought to acknowledge him as the Christ—the sent of God. They were satisfied of his divinity, "We know," &c. They believed his word—gave implicit credit to his doctrines—trusted in his promises—and received his person. He described himself as the gift of God; they opened their hearts to him as such. He claimed the character of a prophet, and they yielded full belief to his word. He appeared as their Redeemer, and they trusted in his work and undertaking. He professed to be a king, and they gave him reverence, and yielded obedience to his commands. Sick—they received him as the great physician; poor—as the rich donor of heaven; enslaved—as the great deliverer; lost—as the good shepherd; guilty—as the Lamb of God, &c.; dead—as the life of the world. And in receiving Christ they became,

2. *Identified with him.* As his disciples—followers—sheep, &c. They received his doctrines, precepts, spirit, and kingdom. What were the advantages derived? To them he gave power, or rather right, or privilege, &c. Christ became as we were, that we might become what he was. He being the Son of God, became the Son of man, that we might become the sons of God. Sin had alienated us. We were rebels—ungodly—children of the wicked one; but by receiving Christ, we thus become the sons of God. Those who received Christ were changed, and made partakers of the divine nature. The carnal heart was destroyed—a new heart, &c.—were converted, and became as little children—were adopted into the divine family—brought nigh to God—introduced into his gracious kingdom, and became saints, heirs, &c. The blessedness of this condition is exceedingly comprehensive.

(1.) The enjoyment of the Spirit of God "Because ye are sons," &c.

(2.) An interest in the love and favor of the Father.

(3.) A gracious right to all the benignant mercies of a good providence.

(4.) Heirship to all the promises of the new covenant.

(5.) Angelic attendance and ministration.

(6.) A good hope of future glory.

(7.) A resurrection body, like Christ's.

(8.) A crown and kingdom with Christ in glory everlasting.

APPLICATION.

Are there not three distinctions of character represented by some in this congregation?

1. Some, we fear, are ignorant of Christ; they represent the world, who knew him not.

2. Some, we fear, reject Christ; they know, &c., but do not approve of his doctrines, or laws, or kingdom, and, like the Jews, receive him not. Wedded to forms—a mere name, &c.

3. Others, we hope, like the believing humble disciples, have received him. How transforming were the results; how happy their effects; how dignifying, &c. Be ye followers of God as dear children. Walk in him. Honor the Saviour, &c.

4. All other distinctions will be worthless at a future day. Think of this. Now receive Christ. To reject Christ is ungrateful, wicked, cruel, &c.

THE GOSPEL CALL.

"Many are called, but few are chosen."—MATT xxii. 14.

THE text is the concluding observation of Christ's in reference to the parable of the marriage feast, and is intimately connected with the exclusion of the man without a wedding garment. It is of the utmost importance that we endeavor to ascertain the true meaning of the word of God. We shall not be likely to do this, unless we

take scripture in its connection. Many wild and ridiculous theories have been palmed upon the scriptures. Indeed, almost any thing may be proved from the Bible, if we take the sound for the sense, or if we take verses or sentences without respect to the passages with which they are connected. Let us then ascertain, if possible, the meaning of the words in the text, and see how they apply to this parable.

(1.) *Called* signifies invited. See ver. 3.

(2.) *Many* clearly signifies a great number. First the Jews are included, ver. 3 to 7; then the Gentiles, ver. 9. Christ sends his gospel to the whole world, to every creature.

(3.) *Chosen* signifies accepted, and approved of, in contrast with the man who was excluded for not having on the wedding garment.

(4.) *Few*, is clearly placed in opposition to the great multitude who were called to the wedding feast. In one word, but few sat down to the feast in comparison of those who were bidden. Let us inquire,

I. The way in which God calls men.

1. *Now God's great method is by the preaching of the gospel.* He sends his servants, as in ver. 3. This is most graphically and powerfully presented to our view, Rom. x. 13–17. Here it is shown, that before salvation there must be calling upon the name of the Lord. But before we can call on him, we must believe in him; before believing is practicable, we must hear of him; we cannot hear, unless some are sent with the message to us. Hence, "How beautiful," &c. "So then faith cometh by hearing," &c. While this is God's general established method of calling sinners, we notice that sometimes he does this,

2. *By the written word—by perusing the truth.* Hence some have taken up the word of God at home, and have thus been led to see their misery and the way of salvation. A tract has sometimes been thus blessed. This has especially been the case among the heathen.

3. *Sometimes God has called by the conversation of his people.* But in this case it has been by their making known the truths of the gospel. Thus the woman of Samaria—her neighbors. God often makes,

4. *The events of providence subservient to this call.* Awful providential events; disappointments in the world; domestic bereavements; bodily afflictions. Now all these may be sanctified, and rendered useful; but every thing will fail of giving comfort and hope to the mind, except the gospel. The gospel is the great primary means of calling sinners to God. We inquire,

II. Into the nature of the call itself.

1. *It is a call from sin to repentance.* This is what God says, "Turn ye from your evil ways." "Cease to do evil," &c. "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c. Now this is obeyed in repentance, when sin is discovered to be evil,—loathed,—sorrowed over,—forsaken.

2. *It is a call from the rejection, to a belief of the gospel.* We might inquire, what are the fetters which bind the souls of men? What keeps them from Christ? It is unbelief. This darkens the mind,—stupifies the soul,—keeps eternity out of view,—prevents the mercy of God. Christ could not do many mighty works, &c. Now God requires that we believe in him. "He that cometh," &c. "Without faith," &c. Sincere belief is ever united with godly repentance. Until we believe we shall never give up all for Christ,—nor take up his cross, &c.

3. *From wretchedness to happiness.* Is it not wretched to be poor, blind, naked, diseased, in slavery, condemned, &c.? Such are invited to be rich, to receive sight, raiment, health, liberty, &c. See Christ's first sermon.

4. *From hell to heaven.* We are condemned, and thus heirs of wrath, &c. Journeying to it,—will certainly be turned into it, unless saved by Christ. Now we are invited to flee from it. To receive a title for heaven,—meetness for heaven. "This is the record that God hath given unto us, eternal life," &c.

III. The extent of the call. Now to this we may reply, it is universal. It refers to every child of man. See the solemn asseveration of Deity in Ezekiel xxxiii. 11. "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent," Acts xvii. 30. "Go ye into all the world." Now it has been said that this is God's general call. It is not surely meant that God is insincere,—that men cannot obey it. Who will dare thus to charge God? Did ever any guilty soul obey, and was rejected? No, never! Try, and was not able? Never! Yet, mark,

IV. It is only partially effectual. "Few are chosen." Not in the aggregate, for there will be a company no man can

number. But comparatively with what might have been. Why few chosen?

1. *Many, like the Jews, sin out the day of their visitation.* "O Jerusalem," &c. "But ye would not." See Prov. i. 24.

2. *Many dislike the terms.* The rich young man,—those who followed Christ for a time, &c.

3. *Many neglect the necessary meetness.* The foolish virgins,—the man without the wedding garment. These are some of the chief reasons.

APPLICATION.

1. God is now calling you. What do you reply?

2. Soon death will call you. Now decide, and humbly hearken to, and obey the invitations of mercy.

3. If you are willing and desirous to come to Christ, depend upon it, you will have the ability, and in no wise will he cast you out.

ON CONSIDERATION.

"My people doth not consider."—ISAIAH i. 3.

THE material parts of the universe are regulated by fixed laws, by which God preserves and governs all things. The merely animal creatures are influenced by instinct, which in many cases seems very nearly to approach to reason. Man is endowed with rational powers, intellectual faculties, and his dignity and bliss depend on the right application of these. Now, one of the main stratagems of Satan is to prevent the wise application of these. To induce men to act without forethought or reflection,—or to incite them to act merely by impulse, or feeling, or passion. And by these artifices the great mass of mankind live without thought, and are borne in stupid insensibility to the eternal world. Thus God complains of the infatuation of Israel, "My people doth not consider."

I. LET ME SPECIFY SOME OF THE IMPORTANT SUBJECTS OF CONSIDERATION. To consider, is to think deliberately,—to reflect maturely. And there are many subjects to which our consideration should be attentively and diligently given.

1. *We should consider the character and will of the blessed God.* His works should lead us to this. If you see a beautiful picture, or piece of sculpture or mechanism, you naturally direct your thoughts to the artist, or mechanist, who has produced them. Now you live in a magnificent and wonderful world. The grandeur of the divine works surrounds you, and ought you not to consider the Creator, the still more wondrous architect of the whole? His relationship to you should induce it. God gave you your existence,—fashioned you,—framed all your members in secret; gave you a reasonable soul. He is your father, your bountiful preserver. Besides, you are ever in his hand,—ever before his eyes,—he ever surrounds you. And he is great, and wise, and powerful, and holy, and just. His love and favor are heaven,—his anger and frown are hell.

2. *We should consider ourselves.* What are we? What our powers? What our capabilities? What our end and destination? What the claims of God? What our duties to others? What the improvement we should make of the present, and what preparation for the future? Are we answering the end of our being, &c.?

3. *We should consider our spiritual state before God.* Is it one of ignorance, or knowledge,—folly, or wisdom,—guilt, or pardon,—condemnation, or acceptance with God? Alienation, or sonship and adoption,—of safety, or imminent peril? Are we heirs of wrath and perdition, or of God and salvation?

4. *We should consider the importance of life.* Life is the seed-time for eternity,—the period of human probation,—the only opportunity of securing eternal blessedness. And how short it is,—how fragile,—how uncertain! How criminal to waste it, to pervert it, &c.!

5. *We should consider the solemnities of death.* "Oh that they were wise," &c. The living know that they must die, but they do not lay it to heart, or consider. Should you not consider its certainty,—its probable nearness,—its truly awful character? Try to realize it,—consider if you were now dying, &c.

6. *We should consider the great concerns of eternity.* The judgment-day. Heaven, with its eternal glories; hell, with its everlasting horrors. Eternity itself, how solemn, how overwhelming! How blissful to the saint; how terrific to the sinner! Eternity! eternity!

7. *We should consider that salvation*

which will fit us for living, dying, and eternity. The salvation, the mercy of God has provided. The salvation, obtained by the Lord Jesus Christ. The salvation, revealed in the gospel. The salvation, which is offered to every sinner. The salvation, which is received by simple faith. The salvation, which delivers from guilt, pollution, fear, and everlasting wrath.

8. *We should consider our present duty and interest.* Men are supposed to care naturally for these. But this care relates merely to the body, and the things of time, —consider whether it is not your duty to obey God,—to serve him,—to live in his fear,—to wait upon him, and glorify him, with your body and soul, which are his. And is not this your interest? "Godliness is profitable to all things," &c. This is moral *freedom;* and is it not better than slavery? This is moral *health;* and is it not better than disease? This is real and solid *peace;* and is it not better than anxiety and remorse? This is absolute *safety;* and is it not better than to be exposed to eternal danger? Oh, yes; reason, wisdom, experience, all agree it is both your interest and duty.

9. *Consider that there is no substitute for religion.* There are various things which people attempt to make such. But they are all failures, miserable failures. The whole world would not be a substitute,—all ineffectual. "Broken cisterns," &c.

APPLICATION.

Now I urge consideration upon all present.

1. *Some have never considered.* Now begin. Retire and reflect,—weigh and consider, &c.

2. *Some have considered occasionally.* When in the chapel, or sick, or in the house of bereavement, &c. Oh, carry it out. Lay your hearts to it.

3. *There is hope for all who will consider.*

4. *They are hopeless who will not consider.*

ON CONSIDERATION

SECOND SKETCH.

"My people doth not consider."—ISAIAH i. 3.

In a former discourse we noticed, that one of Satan's chief devices was to keep men from consideration, and we referred to a variety of subjects to which our consideration should be directed. In pursuing the same theme, we now call your attention

II. TO THE TRUE CHARACTER OF RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATION. And we observe, that,

1. *It should be serious and earnest consideration.* The subjects are too solemn—weighty—to be hastily dismissed. It must not be a mere cursory survey—a rapid glance at these great concerns; but a careful, deliberate contemplation of them; just as a prisoner would do who was to be tried for a capital offence; or as a wrecked mariner how he shall escape a watery grave; or as a man who is undertaking some momentous journey or voyage. If it be done lightly and hastily it will not profit us, or please God.

2. *It should be connected with prayer.* The exercise will be irksome to the carna heart. We shall be disposed to give it up, or do it slightingly. Now, the grace of God will give the spirit and feelings necessary for the right discharge of it. Begin it with prayer—continue it with prayer—follow it out with prayer.

3. *It should be connected also with the public means of grace.* Hearken to the divine word as it is read in the sanctuary, and to the preaching of the gospel—Christian conversation, &c. Consideration will not benefit us if God's means and ordinances are neglected.

4. *It should be continued and persevering.* Not too much to devote a portion of every day to it. The last and first moments would be thus profitably exercised, and it must be followed out. Now,

III. NOTICE SOME OF THE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER.

1. *Because you have powers to do so.* God made you for this end, that you should consider. In neglecting this you despise your own souls—you sink to a level, nay, below the brute creation. They do answer the end of their existence, and they do obey their several instincts. "The ox knoweth his owner." The birds exhibit this in their migrations. The ant, the beaver, the bee, &c., all dispose of their time and means wisely; but an inconsiderate man defaces the noble faculties within him.

2. *Because it is your duty.* God enjoins it; he calls you to it—he urges—he expostulates. It is, therefore, to despise God,

and rebel against him, if ye will not consider.

3. *It is essential to the possession of true religion.* Various are the ways in which God brings men to himself; by a variety of instruments—by various means, &c.; but none without consideration. Manasseh in prison—Jonah in the belly of the whale—the prodigal in his misery, &c. It is the first great step towards saving religion.

4. *It is never neglected in worldly things.* In entering upon any contract—in buying and selling—in all business engagements—in all secular pursuits. We consider in reference to food and raiment—in reference to our houses—in reference to the body—in reference to our families, &c. Now, are the soul's eternal concerns, the only things not deserving of it?

5. *God may compel you to consider.* By giving you the cup of adversity—by bereaving you of the dearest objects of your hearts—by afflicting your bodies—by embittering all earthly good. Now, is it not better to avoid these corrections, and sorrows, and griefs? I notice,

6. *You may consider when it is too late.* Perhaps on the very verge of eternity, if not in eternity itself. The rich man considered in hell; the foolish virgins considered when the cry was heard; the wicked will consider in the great day of Christ's wrath, when they cry to the rocks and hills, &c. Now, the consideration of the lost in eternity will be in vain—will be bitter beyond description—will be everlasting, and as horrible as it is durable. Let me, in conclusion, urge this subject,

1. *On the young.* Early consideration may benefit you in all respects, and for both worlds.

2. *On those connected with the cares of families.* You may have much to do—be poor, &c.; but do not neglect this great duty. Religion will bless your poverty, and sanctify it. It will assist you in domestic difficulties. You need not be poor in reference to both worlds.

3. *Upon the aged.* Surely you will need no persuasion to consider your years—your experience; all seem to urge it upon you. If still impenitent, reflect with horror on the past, and with intense anxiety on the future. But a step between your souls and death, and, perhaps, hell.

4. *Upon all.* Oh! every one consider, and begin now. Christians, consider more and better.

REPENTANCE.

"Repent ye."—Acts iii. 19.

We may well hope that serious, deliberate, and prayerful consideration will issue in a change of mind, and a new course of life. Our present subject is repentance—a subject to which the scriptures frequently call our attention, and which is essentially connected with salvation. All pious persons have experienced in their own souls true repentance. All who intend to become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ must become personally acquainted with repentance; and all who do not repent in this life will be the victims of a despairing and unavailing repentance forever. Let us then ascertain in what repentance consists—its evidences—and its necessity.

I. In what does repentance consist? It includes,

1. *A knowledge of sin.* That we have scriptural views of sin—in its heinousness before God—its offensiveness to the divine law—its great evil—its polluting influences, and ruining power. Many seem not to recognise any thing as sin, except flagrant and vile crimes against the property or life of their fellow-creatures; others mock at sin, or think lightly of it; but with the repenting sinner, sin is viewed as evil, abominable, and deserving of divine wrath.

2. *Conviction of sin.* That this evil affects us; that we are guilty—deeply guilty—guilty in an aggravated degree—guilty beyond enumeration—guilty both of omitting the commands, and violating the prohibitions of God's law—guilty as it respects God, as Lawgiver, Sovereign, Father, Redeemer, &c.—guilty as it respects men Now this conviction must be deep, startling, &c.

3. *Sorrow for sin.* Not for its consequences only, but for itself as an evil thing. "Against thee, &c. have I sinned." Sinned against God's mercy, forbearance, &c. Now, this sorrow includes what is meant by a broken spirit, and a contrite heart. Mourning for the evils of our hearts and lives. This must not be evanescent, and merely impulse; but abiding, and from a principle of the extreme vileness of all iniquity.

4. *Self-loathing and abhorrence of sin.* He reflects on his folly, infatuation, &c.; he now sees things through the right medium, and he exclaims, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." "Not worthy to be called thy son," &c. Thus the publican stood afar off, &c. See 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27.

5. *Confession and turning from sin.* "I acknowledge my transgression," &c. "We have sinned," &c. Dan. ix. 4. Now, this confession must be free, and full, and hearty, and it must issue in forsaking sin, and seeking the Lord God with all our hearts and souls. Observe,

II. ITS EVIDENCES. If we have repented truly, there will be,

1. *A new state of mind.* God—holiness—sin—ourselves, &c. will all be differently viewed. Mind, now light under the influence of divine truth; swayed by the fear of God, &c.

2. *A spiritual conversation.* No man ever repented, who did not speak of it, and show it by the fruit of his lips. Worldliness, pleasure frivolity, will not now distinguish his conversation. There will also be RESTITUTION in all things possible.

3. *Obedience to the truth.* God's word and law now paramount. "Lord, what shall I do?" How serve thee—how glorify thee. No longer walking in the broad way of death; no longer with the heedless multitude, &c. He seeks the companionship of the pious—attends the ordinances of the Lord's house—takes pleasure in the holy exercises of religion.

4. *Union to Christ and spiritual life through Christ Jesus.* True repentance is unto life; such, though dead in sin, are now alive from the dead. "My son that was dead," &c. Vitally grafted into Christ, the living vine. Live a life of faith on the Son of God, &c. Now, these evidences will be permanent and abiding, &c. Notice,

III. THE NECESSITY FOR SUCH A REPENTANCE.

1. *It is necessary to a right state of our own minds.* Our powers, and faculties, and feelings, are all deranged, diseased, and perverted, until we have repented of sin. Repentance brings us into that state for which we were originally destined—answer the end of our being, &c.

2. *It is necessary to the enjoyment of the divine favor.* God is rich in mercy, &c; but we cannot enjoy that, unless we are likeminded with God. Repentance ensures his grace, and the communication of his forgiving love.

3. *Necessary to our own peace and comfort.* No peace without it—no abiding consolation, &c.; but they that sow the tears of repentance shall reap in joy; they that mourn are comforted. "O Lord, I will praise thee," &c.

4. *It is necessary to our entrance into heaven.* "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Not a redeemed spirit in heaven that has not repented; therefore endless life impossible without genuine repentance.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let me caution against mistakes.* Be not deceived by a spurious repentance—that which is merely counterfeit. Partial reformation from some sins—regret for the evil we have sustained—the mere assumption of a religious profession, &c.

2. *Let me warn you against delays.* This repentance is necessary now—future opportunities you may not possess. Many have resolved and purposed, but have been ruined by delay.

3. *Let me encourage against despondency.* You have now space for repentance—opportunity for repentance—the means of repentance—the call to repentance—the rich promises of grace to aid your repentance—the certain acceptance of your souls through Christ Jesus, if you do repent.

4. *Let me remind the impenitent*—That hell will be the place, and eternity the duration, of the repentance of those who obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh! awake, awake, and call upon thy God, that thou perish not.

JUSTIFICATION.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." ROM. v. 1.

THERE is no doctrine of the gospel of greater moment than that of the scriptural justification of the sinner. Right views are at the very basis of the Christian scheme. Error here will lead to other practical and doctrinal errors, all of which will be destructive to the best interests of the soul. I am particularly solicitous,

therefore, that you should most distinctly understand the word of God on this momentous theme. This was the great battering-ram of Luther, by which he shook the doctrinal errors of the church of Rome to their foundation. Imbued with correct notions of this doctrine, it is impossible that hundreds of clergymen of the church of England should have been infected with the pestiferous notions of Puseyism. It is requisite, therefore, that the church of Christ should hold a clear, steady light on this great doctrine; and that every man should perfectly understand it for his own comfort and salvation. Let us notice,

I. WHAT JUSTIFICATION INVOLVES. But a word or two as to the signification of the term. It signifies, to pronounce righteous and free from charge of guilt; and, therefore, demands that the person should be treated as such. It is the opposite therefore of condemnation, and is so placed before us in the Holy Scriptures. Now, scriptural justification involves this truth,

1. *That the person is under law.* That is, responsible to law for his conduct. Now, God gave our first parents a law in paradise; and he has revealed his holy character and will in the moral law, as given on Sinai. This law is holy—in perfect conformity with the divine nature. "Right," or just—quite equitable between God the lawgiver, and the subject to whom the law was given. "Good," or benevolent in its aspect—bearing favorably on the well-being and true blessedness of the subject. It involves,

2. *The transgression of that law.* That the statutes of that law have been wittingly and voluntarily broken; that its high and sacred claims have been violated. This disobedience must have been the personal free act of the transgressor. Scriptural justification involves,

3. *That the transgressor has no means within himself of escaping the punishment of his iniquity.* For the law, of course, had its sanctions and its threatenings—its rewards and its punishments; guilt therefore proved, and of course punishment must follow. Now, the sinner has no resource within himself to avert the curse of the broken law. However ingenuously he confesses—however deeply he laments—however fervently he supplicates—justice demands the execution of the law. He may refer to his obedience to some points; but he that has offended in one transgression, is exposed to all the vengeance proclaimed against the guilty. He can offer no merit, for he is a culprit deemed only worthy of death; he can promise no future recompense, for his sin has involved him in inability to serve God; he can have no benefit from his fellow-men, for they are all pronounced guilty with himself. "For all have sinned," &c. "None righteous." If mercy were extended as a mere sovereign act, it would seem that the law had been too rigorous, or that contradictory attributes and mutability of mind distinguished the lawgiver. Then, we ask, can sinners be justified? And we notice in reply to that interrogation,

II. THE GROUND OF THE SINNER'S JUSTIFICATION BEFORE GOD. Now, there are two grounds, both of which are essential to our justification.

1. *The meritorious ground.* The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. "He suffered, the just for the unjust." "He bare our sins," &c. "He suffered for our sins, and rose again for our justification." Now, just observe how this meets the case. The law has been dishonored; Christ, our surety, assumes the nature of man, for whom the law was made, and in that nature obeys it, clearly, fully, and perfectly; he enthrones it on his heart, embodies it in his life, and proclaims it in all its purity and glory to the world; he then meets its penal exactions; it demands the death of the sinner, pronouncing him accursed; he freely lays down his life, and dies in the room and stead of the transgressor. But, did not the law demand the death of many transgressors? Yes; but the infinite worth and preciousness of Christ's blood meet fully all the infinite demands of the law upon transgressors. Now the law is honored, not relaxed; satisfaction is made, not evaded; and now mercy can act in unison, and not in opposition to the holiness of God and his righteous laws. But, observe,

2. *The instrumental means of justification.* "Faith;" being "justified by faith." Now, we have shown that the sinner could not be justified by works. God, therefore, reveals his love to us by the gospel. He assures us of his merciful and gracious disposition towards us, and affirms that he can be the just God, and yet the Saviour. He demands, however, that we should credit his word, and rest on the sacrifice of his Son, for our justification; he demands that

we should plead the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and come to him, expecting the exercise of his forgiving love in and through him. And this is faith, to believe the record that God hath given of his Son; and all who exercise that faith are at once freely justified from all things, &c. Without this faith we are under condemnation—even the condemnation of unbelief, and the wrath of God abideth on us. Notice,

III. The results of our justification before God.

1. *All our sins are blotted out.* Sins of all grades, and hues, and aggravations, are forgiven; not one charge now against us—no condemnation, &c. Who can describe the preciousness of such a pardon?

2. *Peace and acceptance with God.* Now in a state of reconciliation with God. No longer enemies and aliens, but friends and fellow-citizens; accepted into his favor and family; have his peace upon us, and within us, by the Holy Ghost given unto us.

3. *An interest in all the blessings of redemption.* Now children of the covenant—heirs of the promises—expectants of eternal life—the rich charter of mercy is now ours. "All are yours, ye are Christ's," &c.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. *This great blessing of justification is held out in the gospel to every sinner.* All are guilty—all are redeemed—and all invited to believe. No respect of persons with God. God hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all.

2. *Justification is indispensable to present and eternal salvation.* It is salvation begun, and there can be no admission into heaven except to the justified, &c.

3. *Justification immediately follows faith, and therefore is instantaneous.* The Antinomian doctrine of eternal justification is a gross fallacy—alike opposed to the gospel and common sense. But where faith appropriates Christ, as revealed in the gospel, that instant the great and glorious change is effected.

4 *Justification only affects our state and condition.* In itself it is simply our being pronounced righteous, and thus differs from regeneration and inward holiness; but it is invariably followed by these.

5. *This view of justification gives all the glory to God, ascribes all the merit to Christ, and bestows all the benefits on the believing sinner.*

6. *Urge it on the personal attention of all present.* You have the glorious gospel, in which Christ is set forth as crucified for you. Then believe that testimony.

"Believe, and all your sin's forgiven;
Only believe, and yours is heaven"

CONVERSION.

"And be converted."—Acts iii. 19.

Repentance is a change of mind and feeling towards God, and invariably results in the conversion of those who are the subjects of it. Conversion is the turning of the soul from its former course of action and pursuit into a new and holy way of obedience to God. A converted man is one who has been turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. It is the return of the soul to its original state of allegiance and favor. Let us look at the nature, means, and importance of this change.

I. At the nature of the change which conversion involves.

1. *There is a change in the understanding, from darkness to light.* The natural man is blind—dwelling in the region of the shadow of death—a child of night, and of darkness. His ignorance respects all the great moral things of the soul, God, and eternity. Ignorant of his own true state and character; ignorant of God's true nature and perfections; ignorant of the awful responsibility in which he is placed in reference to the eternal world.

2. *It is a change in the judgment, from error to truth.* His perverted judgment formerly called evil good, and good evil; he called sin pleasure, and religion melancholy; he called transgression liberty, and God's service bondage. Now his judgment is entirely altered. He pronounces sin bondage—Satan's service despotism—the paths of wisdom pleasure—iniquity madness; and this will apply to all the high moral principles of true religion.

3. *It is a change in the affections, from carnality and selfishness to love.* The carnal mind—enmity, &c. He hated the things of God—his word—his ordinances—his people—his service, &c. Full of wrath and envy to mankind. Selfishness was predominant—now this corrupt demon is dethroned. Love sways the sceptre—love

reigns in the soul. He loves God, and his fellow-creatures also — he dwells in love, &c.

4. *A change in the will, from rebellion to obedience.* He formerly chose sin—preferred rebellion—selected the way of the transgressor. Now he has turned from these dark ways of sin and death; he has inquired for the old path—the good old way, and he walks therein, &c. He hearkens to God's word and obeys it. He was once the servant of sin, but now being made free from sin, he is the servant of God, and of righteousness, &c. It is evident, therefore, that conversion involves an entire change of heart and life. It will be seen in all the spheres and relationships in which we move; it will be visible to the church and to the world. The lion is now a lamb—the raven, a dove—the thorn, a fig-tree—the curse, a blessing.

II. The means of conversion.

1. *God's grace is the originating cause.* God's mercy has rendered it possible. Without this, our state, and misery, and destiny would have been fixed and inevitable. His love, therefore, provided the sacrifice through whose merit and worthiness we could return to him. "Return," he says, "for I have redeemed thee." Had he not redeemed us, our return had been impossible.

2. *Divine truth is the instrumental means.* "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Christ said to his disciples, "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you," John xv. 3. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Now, both the written and preached word may do this, but chiefly the latter. "The gospel is the power of God to salvation," &c. Thus the three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost. Thus the Corinthians, &c.; see Rom. x. 14–17. Now, remember, divine truth contains the ideas, thoughts, feelings, and will of God concerning sinners; and it contains matter addressed to the understanding, so as to enlighten it; to the judgment, so as to free it from error; to the affections, so as to move, and melt, and win them; to the will, so that it may choose and decide rightly, &c. If sinners are not converted by this, neither would they, though one should rise from the dead.

3. *Faith and obedience to the truth are essential to conversion.* The sinner is called to hear it—to understand it—to weigh and consider it—to credit it—to act upon it—to obey it with all his heart. We are not to dispute or cavil whether he can do so. God commands it; and whether the ability be inherent, or communicated by the Holy Spirit, he must do it, or there can be no conversion. Now, the docility, teachableness, credence, trust, and simple obedience of the child, are placed before us as the model to which in conversion we are to be conformed. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children," &c. Notice,

III. The importance of conversion.

1. *Conversion is the dignity of the soul; without it we are debased.* Fallen—wretched — miserable — traitors — outcasts, &c. Crown fallen—glory departed—soul degraded. Conversion elevates, dignifies, exalts to a condition of mental and moral glory.

2. *Conversion blesses, and without it we are miserable.* No peace, or abiding comfort; no real joy, or true hope. Without it, the victim of anxiety, and remorse, and dread; with it, there is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Christ's own peace, "which passeth all understanding."

3. *Conversion is identified with pardon: without it we are condemned.* Hence the verse of the text, "that your sins may be blotted out." God has said, if we turn unto him, he will return unto us. "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c. Yes, all the converted enjoy remission of sins, and peace with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Without it, every sin rests in all its guilt and heavy penalty upon us; guilt that will overwhelm at the judgment day, and damn the soul forever.

4. *Conversion is connected with eternal life, and without it there must be the misery of eternal death.* Heaven is peopled with the converted—hell with the unconverted. The one are heirs of wrath—the other heirs of eternal salvation. An unconverted man cannot see the celestial kingdom; he is unfit for it—could not enjoy it. A man could have no enjoyment from the conversation of those who spake in a language of which he was ignorant; a sick man no pleasure, although in a region of health; an unholy man no bliss among the spotless hosts of the beatified; a man in heaven, hating God, despising Christ, disliking the saints, loving sin, &c., how fruitless of joy would heaven be to him!

APPLICATION.

1. *We address the converted.* Urge gratitude, humility, and continuance in the knowledge, and obedience to the truth.

2. *Urge it upon all the unconverted.* None too good not to require it; none too evil to be beyond it. Oh, every one reflect and consider your ways, and be wise!

3. *Encourage the anxious inquirer.* What hinders your conversion? Believe the truth now, obey it now, and be saved.

DIVINE SONSHIP.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—ROMANS viii. 14.

THE terms born of God—born again—begotten of God—regeneration and adoption, are frequently met with in the divine word. Our present subject must of course include the signification of each and all of these New Testament phrases. Let us then endeavor to ascertain,

I. HOW BELIEVERS BECOME THE SONS OF GOD.

II. THE EVIDENCES OF THAT STATE.

III. THE BLESSINGS IDENTIFIED WITH IT. We ask, then,

I. HOW BELIEVERS BECOME THE SONS OF GOD? In their natural state they are described as dead—as carnal—or as children of sin and Satan. A great change, therefore, must be effected before they can become the dignified children of God. The New Testament refers their sonship to two sources, regeneration and adoption; both of which have respect to man's peculiar state while in his natural condition. As dead in trespasses and sins, they must,

1. *Be regenerated.* That is, begotten from the dead. See 1 Pet. i. 3. Now this communication of spiritual life, even the life of God in the soul, is attributed to, or connected with, three things.

(1.) Born of the Spirit. "Except a man be born of the Spirit," &c., John iii. 5, 6, 8. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." The holy and blessed Agent by which the heart is changed and renewed is God's blessed Spirit. The prophet describes this at length, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, &c.

(2.) Born of the word. Thus the apostle speaks of those begotten through or by the gospel. The word is obviously the seed which produces spirit and life. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God," &c., 1 Pet. i. 23. "Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth," &c., James i. 18.

(3.) Born of water. This expression is found in Christ's discourse with Nicodemus, John iii. 5. It is also included in the apostle's address to Titus, "By the washing of regeneration," iii. 5, in connection with the renewing of the Holy Ghost. The great Author of regeneration is God the Holy Spirit; the means employed, the blessed word of divine truth; and the external sign of having exercised faith in that word, and experienced the renewing influences of the Spirit, the baptism of water. See 1 Peter iii. 21. But our sonship is ascribed,

2. *To adoption.* When an orphan, or the child of another, is taken into the family, and receives all the privileges, &c. Now the sinner is by nature a child of Satan, and an alien and rebel towards God; but God mercifully adopts and receives him into his spiritual family, and gives him all the privileges of a child. See Gal. iv. 4, &c.; John i. 12; Eph. i. 5. In adoption we have a new name, are members of a new family, and have, therefore, new associates, &c. Now, as in justification, so in sonship, "We are all the children of God by faith." Notice, then,

II. THE EVIDENCES OF DIVINE SONSHIP.

1. *The enjoyment of the divine Spirit.* "Because ye are sons, he hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts," Gal. iv. 6. "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," Rom. viii. 15. God's Spirit bears witness with their spirits that they are the children of God.

2. *Conformity to the divine likeness.* In a state of sin there is borne the image of the earthly—the image of the evil one. But all who are born of God resemble him, and bear the image of the heavenly. "And having put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 10.

3. *Obedience to the divine will.* Our text instructs us that they are led by the Spirit of God. This is the characteristic of every son—to this there is no exception—this is the very end of their new creation. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. ii. 10. "If

we say that we abide in him, we should walk as he walked." It is the nature of the renewed mind to rise upward to spiritual and heavenly things, and to bear fruit unto holiness.

4. *Exhibition of divine love.* This sign is much insisted on in the holy word. "Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God," 1 John v. 1. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us," &c., iv. 12. Our love is to resemble the divine love to us. "That ye love one another, as I have loved you," John xiii. 34. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples," &c., ver. 35. Having considered the evidences of divine sonship, let us notice,

III. THE BLESSINGS IDENTIFIED WITH IT.

1. *An interest in the complacent love of God.* God approves of his children—delights in them—they are his treasure—the portion, &c. His love to them exceeds that of the most affectionate father, or the most tender-hearted mother. "And this love is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost," &c.

2. *They are interested in all the blessings and privileges of the divine family.* The rich provision of God's house and table is all theirs. They wear the family robe—possess the family title—enjoy the family guard, "For the angel of the Lord encompasseth," &c.—and have an eternal interest in all the family promises, which are exceedingly great and precious.

3. *Heirs of eternal happiness and glory.* How sublimely this is expressed! "Heirs of God." "Joint-heirs with Christ." "Called to God's eternal kingdom and glory." "It doth not yet appear what they shall be," &c. "They shall inherit all things." Sit on the Saviour's throne, and enjoy the beatific vision, &c., forever and ever. Learn, then,

1. *The Christian's true dignity.* What title, state, or condition, to compare with his? How petty, puerile, and valueless, all the distinctions of this sublunary world!

2. *The Christian state must be happy.* This is reiterated again and again in the scriptures. It is their highest privilege to rejoice, to rejoice in the Lord always, &c.

> "Why should the children of a king
> Go mourning all their days?"

3. *The Christian's responsibilities must be great.* If such be the dignity of their calling, how holy and unblameable should they be in all manner of conversation! "Only let your conversation," &c.

4. *The Christian's prospects, how enrapturing!* However poor, afflicted, persecuted, despised, yet they are the sons of God, and heirs of everlasting glory.

> "Then let our songs abound,
> And every tear be dry;
> We're marching through Immanuel's ground,
> To fairer worlds on high!"

HOLINESS.

"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness."—1 THESS. iv. 7.

OF all subjects, holiness is the most truly important to man. In this state he was originally created. To restore him to holiness was the great design of redemption. To effect this, the Saviour opened the purifying fountain of his own blood. To reveal this, and the way of its attainment, is the grand design of divine revelation. The preacher's grand mission is one of holiness. The Spirit of God exerts his influences on the human heart to effect this great consummation. The prayers, self-denial, obedience, and sufferings of Christians, are directly for this one attainment. And heaven itself is invariably represented as the temple of the sanctified, the home of the holy, and the land in which the pure in heart behold God. Surely, then, it is worthy of our serious consideration, and cannot be too deeply pondered by all who are candidates for everlasting blessedness. Let us consider this subject in the spirit of humble and reverent prayer, that God may enable us clearly to understand it, and appreciate it, in all its divine and everlasting importance.

I. HOLINESS IS IMMEDIATELY CONNECTED WITH REGENERATION. There is no holiness in man previous to this. All scripture testifies to his sin, and depravity, and guilt. There may be intellectuality, external morality, humanity, kindness, amiability, &c., but there can be no holiness. The old heart cannot be holy. Holiness, therefore, begins its spiritual reign when man is renewed in the likeness of the divine image. When he is born from above,—born of God, &c. When old things pass away, and all things become new. When the tree is made good—the fountain pure. We must

be partakers of the divine nature before we can reflect the divine likeness.

II. HOLINESS IS THE CONFORMITY OF THE WHOLE MAN TO GOD'S IMAGE. God is not only the source, but the model of purity. Man's original holiness was his being created in the divine likeness. A restoration to that is New Testament holiness. When the understanding is illumined with holy knowledge. When the judgment is influenced by holy truth. When the affections are inflamed with holy love and desires. When the conscience is cleansed from unholiness, and pacified with the holy blood of Christ. When the will is influenced by the holy commands and motives of the gospel. Now thus the heart and soul become the residence of the Holy Spirit, the temple of the living God.

III. HOLINESS WILL BE PRACTISED AND OBSERVED IN THE LIFE. Holy desires, and thoughts, and purposes, and aspirations, will manifest themselves in the life. These will be,

1. *A holy conversation.* A conversation seasoned with grace. A godly conversation,—the fruit of the lips will be holiness to the Lord. Wisdom, and piety, and kindness, will regulate the tongue of the holy.

2. *Holy obedience.* Walking in the fear of God, and in the commandments of the Most High. A delight to do the will of our heavenly Father. Thus the servants of God have their fruit unto holiness. And this obedience will have respect to all the commandments of the Lord. There will be seen what the Lord requireth of his people. "To do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God." This obedience will be the voluntary, earnest obedience of the heart, constrained only by love to the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be,

3. *A spirit of holy devotion.* Walking and holding intimate communion with God. Living in the exercise of meditation, praise, and prayer. They will worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. There will be constant intimacy with the holy exercises of the closet, and devout attachment to the services of the sanctuary. How these were combined in the life of the Psalmist! Ps. lxiii. 1.

4. *Delight in the fellowship of kindred holy minds.* The society of the wicked and friendship with the world will be abandoned. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee," &c. There will be fervent attachment to the persons and company of the pious. "Then they that feared the Lord spake," &c. See also Acts i. 14, ii. 42.

IV. HOLINESS IS PROGRESSIVE. Thus differing from justification and regeneration, which are instantaneous and complete. Holiness begins with the seed, the grain, and grows into the lofty tree. With a little leaven exercising its influence till the whole be leavened. With the morning dawn, which shineth more and more till the perfect day. With the new-born babe, then the young man, afterwards the father in Christ. In all its parts, and graces, and virtues, it is progressive. Knowledge more clear and extensive,—judgment more sound,—affections more mellowed,—conscience more pure,—will more pliant and obedient to God. The life more exemplary, and the whole body, soul, and spirit, more sanctified by the Spirit and grace of God, until they are fully meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

V. THE MEANS OF HOLINESS ARE VARIOUS. Reading and meditating in God's holy word. Attendance on the public worship of God's house. Constant meditation,—self-communion and prayer. The exercise of growing faith in the Lord Jesus. The daily studying of the example of Christ,—and, through these, the rich enjoyment of the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATION.

1. *How all-important is holiness!* What is our attainment in it? Our desires, &c.

2. *A holy heaven is the final hope of the believer.*

3. *To diffuse the spirit of holiness the great end of the Christian's life.*

4. *The unholy cannot see and enjoy God.*

BELIEF ON TESTIMONY.

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."—JOHN xx. 29.

AMONG the disciples of the blessed Jesus, we see manifested almost every infirmity that can be seen even now among the followers of the Saviour; and these failings are ingenuously detailed—not one of their errors is concealed from mankind—the whole truth is fearlessly and prominently

exhibited. Look at the ambition of the disciples, desiring pre-eminence, &c. Look at the selfishness of the disciples, "what shall we have," &c. Look at their dulness and slowness of heart, &c. Look at the betrayal of one, the denial of another, and the desertion of all. Then look at Thomas, how marvellously incredible, especially if you consider Christ's previous predictions that he should rise; the testimony given; their character, number, &c. Again, *they* had *seen* Christ, &c. Jesus, therefore, while condescending to his weakness, yet commented on his unbelief, &c. Our text presents two classes of believers, and affirms the superior blessedness of one over the other.

I. CONSIDER THE TWO CLASSES OF BELIEVERS.

1. *Those who believe on the ground of sense.* "Because thou hast seen," &c. You reply, this is necessary and unavoidable. Not so; bigotry, prejudice, and envy, can even overcome the most striking manifestation. A person comes with a great message. His dignity, piety, goodness, are all unquestionable. He seeks neither fame nor riches. Surely his testimony should be received. He can appeal to sacred predictions—he works miracles—he stands forth and does what no other man ever did. You say, "they *must believe.*" No! they reject, despise, envy, calumniate, persecute, seek to kill, &c. Others, however, candidly witnessed, and heard, and believed. Now, there is therefore some, but not the greatest amount of virtue in this faith. Observe, then,

2. *Those who believe on the testimony of others.* Now, most things believed must rest on this kind of evidence. The Jews thus believed in Abraham and Moses, whom they never saw, and in David and the prophets. With respect to countries, and persons, and events, we every day thus believe. *The duty* is, to ascertain the possibility, and the reasonableness of the message or fact, and the characters of those who convey it, and the end it is to accomplish, &c. Now, the gospel will bear this investigation—it may be brought to this ordeal. The *facts*, the *writers*, and the *end*, are all worthy of God, &c. There are two additional evidences of the truth of Christianity worthy of our careful attention.

1. *The transformation of character it effects.* The gospel changes the life. It makes the man a new creature; it purifies the fruit of the lip; it destroys the propensity to evil; it converts from darkness to light, &c. Ignorance, irreverence, selfishness, are exchanged for knowledge, devotion, and benevolence. The thorn, becomes a fig-tree; the polluted fountain, clean; the heart and life, changed; the curse, a blessing. Now, this is the unvarying effect on the lives of those who believe it. If a mere invention of men can do this, let disbelievers devise some fabulous scheme, and do the same. Purity can only spring from purity, so that this is an irrefragable proof of the divinity of the gospel.

2. *The consolations it imparts.* It makes its recipients happy. Mourning exchanged for joy—distress for peace—sorrow for gladness—despair for hope. They bless and enjoy God. You say it is delusion—they say it is reality. At any rate it answers the end, and at times when every thing else fails; in sickness and death. It is the testimony of myriads of all classes and conditions, &c. of mankind. Let us now consider,

II. THE SUPERIOR BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN, AND YET HAVE BELIEVED. There is blessedness in the former case; but,

1. *To believe without seeing, evinces greater candor of mind.* And this is in accordance with our faculties and powers. We commend not credulity, for that believes without evidence, and despite of reason. We, notwithstanding, abhor prejudice, for that refuses to inquire and know. Now, candor steps in and says, "State the facts; produce the evidence; allow me to judge and conclude." We ought to believe nothing, however plausible, without this; nor reject any thing, however apparently absurd, until it has been subjected to this process. The Bereans were commended, &c.

2. *This enters more immediately into the nature of true faith.* Real essential faith we distinguish from sight. "We walk," &c. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for," &c.

3. *This kind of faith gives greater glory to God.* Read Romans iv. 14, &c. So also of Noah and Moses.

4. *This is the faith which has been mostly exercised in every age of the world.* Few have seen. Faith in Christ could seldom have any other basis. His ministry only lasted three years; comparatively few

therefore, saw him. All the patriarchs and prophets to the day of Christ. All believers from the period of his death to the present time. Therefore, very few would be saved, if, like Thomas, they refused unless they saw, &c.

5. *This is the faith which we must exercise in respect to the other great truths of religion.* The kindness of divine providence —the guardian and protecting care of God —the promise of heaven—the crown of celestial glory—the resurrection of the body, &c.—nay, the very being of God, the existence of the Saviour, the intercession of our Mediator; so that if we are now to believe at all, we must have the faith which sees not. The *blessedness* of *believing* is manifold. It *interests* in the promises, for they are all ours. A *bright* hope. Faith gives to hope all its clearness, and power, and *abiding consolation.* Faith brings distant things near. Heaven to earth, &c. *Spiritual fruitfulness.* No real grace or virtue can thrive without it, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Have you faith in the Lord Jesus? In his person, offices, work, &c. This faith may be increased by reading the scriptures, prayer, &c.

2. We urge believers to receive the testimony given of Christ. Consider its adaptedness to your state, its importance, and then give it your cordial approbation.

3. Believe not, and you exclude yourselves from all the blessings of the gospel. He that believeth not must perish.

A QUESTION CONCERNING FAITH.

"Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?"—JOHN xvi. 3.

No person can have read the scriptures without being impressed with the frequent reference which is made to faith. It is universally held up as one of the very essentials of religion; indeed, the first, great cardinal principle of all acceptable piety. "He that cometh to God," &c. "This is the commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another," &c. The want of faith deprives of all the blessings of the gospel, and exposes to the righteous wrath of God. On the other hand, "all things are possible to him that believeth." Then let us examine ourselves by the question Jesus proposes in the text. The subject; the persons interrogated; and the evidences to be adduced, are the three points to which we call your attention.

I. THE SUBJECT OF THE INTERROGATION. It is not knowledge, opinions, feelings, mode of worship, &c., but believing. "Do ye now *believe?*" Let us look at it,

1. *As the credence of testimony.* The scriptures reveal Jesus Christ to us. Full of Christ, of his person, offices, work, &c.; of his sufferings, death; of his mediation, kingdom, reign, glory, &c. Now, do you give the clear and full assent of your mind to what God has testified? Do you without hesitation receive all the record God has given of his Son? Is it enough that God has said it, however sublime, mysterious, and beyond reason? Are you quite satisfied that it should be believed, without demurring, or questioning, or cavilling? Let us look at believing,

2. *As the hearty reliance of the soul.* You are in a lost state. Christ is revealed as one who seeks and saves. Do you rely on him as such? As poor, do you rely on the riches of his grace? As sick, on him as the one physician? As condemned, on him as the surety, the mediator? Do you roll body, soul, and all on him, for time and eternity? withdrawing confidence from every thing, and every person else in the universe? Do you do this without doubting or fearing? Let us look at faith,

3. *In its receiving capacity.* God offers Jesus Christ as his great gift. Have you received him as your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? As your prophet, priest, and king? Have you received the Lord Jesus unto your hearts and souls, as the unspeakable gift of God? Believing includes each and all of these acts. Do you, then, *now believe?* We pass on,

II. TO THE PERSONS INTERROGATED. "Do ye," &c. He put not the question to ignorant persons—to profligate persons—to the worldly; but Christ put it to his disciples. We put it to you, who are called Christians. "Do ye," &c. Look at the form of the question. It is,

1. *Strictly personal.* We cannot answer for one another—not for our nearest friends, &c. To our own master we stand or fall.

Religion is entirely personal. Let us, then, examine and see whether *we* are *in* the faith, &c. To examine the creeds, or opinions, or practice of others is not our province. But, "Do *ye*," &c.

2. *The question also refers to the present.* Most seriously disposed persons intend to believe—expect they will—hope they will. But the future is God's; we cannot presume on a day. But do ye *now;* are you at this time receiving Christ? If God searches now—tries you now, &c.; your *present* state. Neither does it refer to the past. Have you *formerly* believed? Can you be safe or happy to trust to past recollections, &c. It is the present to which the text refers.

3. *The text assumes that a satisfactory reply is possible.* That we may say No, or Yes. The whole scriptures go on this principle. Without it we could not apply revealed truth as it is addressed to the Christian. Abraham knew that he believed. The blind man, "Dost thou," &c. Paul, "I know," &c. Now, keep the definition of the subject in view. We say nothing of visions—of marvellous revelations—of fancies and feelings; but of credence, reliance, reception. Surely this is unanswerable. Then,

III. Let us ascertain what evidences may be deemed satisfactory.

1. *The recollection of the process by which we were brought to believe.* This state does not come without certain events, &c. A conviction that we do not believe; a sense of guilt, &c.; a deep impression of its importance; the going out of the mind; the act of the soul on the ground of the divine testimony, &c. Besides, the sermon—the address—the providential event, &c., the mental effort cannot easily be forgotten. A man rescued from the water; a culprit pardoned at the bar; a person raised from the vergo of the grave cannot forget.

2. *The influence that believing exerts on the mind.* If we believe, then we shall desire to *know* more and more of Christ. We shall *love* Christ, &c. It works by love, &c. We shall *hope* in Christ, be grateful to Christ, delight in Christ, &c.

3. *The effect it produces on the life.* Unbelief is connected with rebellion; faith with loyal obedience. One with irreverence, the other with holy fear; one with polluted streams, the other pure; one, evil conversation, the other a good, &c.; one, bad works, the other good works. The life is affected by our unbelief or belief, as the rudder directs the vessel. Obedience and self-denial will ever accompany belief.

4. *Its connection with spiritual enjoyment* Believing, the spirit of adoption and peace is given; joy is given. The cloud is blotted out; the thunders roll not, &c. The word of God is different in our estimation: the ordinances; the sabbaths. We, who have believed, do enter into *rest*, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. The subject is deeply interesting; it is of vital importance, &c.; it concerns me, and concerns you all.

2. Let me urge on all who have not believed, the essential importance of doing so. We present you with the writings of evangelists and apostles, and urge you to receive them as concerning you, and heartily to embrace them. Nothing will give you an interest in the great salvation but a living faith.

3. A reference to this subject will often tend to our profit and safety. Do I now believe?

THE PHILOSOPHY OF OBEDIENCE.

"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments, which I command thee this day; that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth."—Deut. xxviii. 1.

Law—Obedience—Blessedness, are the three great topics of our text; indeed they are the three great principles of revelation. The will of God is law, and all his commandments are the reflections of his holy and blessed character and perfections. It is obvious that an infinitely wise Being must suit his laws to that which is to be governed. Now, moral laws are not suited to irrational creatures, nor mental laws to material things. Mere matter is governed entirely by physical laws—mind, by intellectual laws—moral responsible beings, by moral or righteous laws. Now, these general remarks will apply to all the works of God, and to the divine government throughout the universe. We wish to bring so much of this subject before you as re-

ates to man, and is connected immediately with his present and eternal welfare. Religious people fall into great errors, and expose themselves to many evils, through not having comprehensive and clear views of this subject. Let us, then, with all the plainness of which the subject is capable, look at the laws of God in reference to man, and the advantages to be derived from obedience to them.

I. God has established a threefold law in connection with mankind.

1. *We are under physical laws, having material bodies.* The body was originally formed of the earth, and, therefore, is of the earth—earthy. Now, it is clear that the body requires material sustenance—material preservation from evil, &c. Therefore wholesome food, air, exercise, and repose, are necessary to its well-being. It is liable to be injured or destroyed by improper food, air, &c.; exposed to accidents, &c.; therefore prudent care is necessary. Now, a disregard to the laws which regulate the body, will be productive of pain, disease, or premature death. Neglect of the prudential laws may involve in calamity and ruin. Now, it is not obedience to any other laws which will secure health or bodily enjoyment. A man may be very intellectual, and very devotional; but these will neither sustain life, prevent disease, nor avert calamity. Neither is it wise for any man to pray against sickness or peril, if he, at the same time, neglect the laws which affect his physical condition; unless he expects God to be constantly working miracles, and changing the material laws of the universe, on his account.

2. *We are under mental laws, as intellectual beings.* We have capacities for knowledge, and improvement, and the expansion of the intellectual powers. Now, reading, study, investigation, and reflection are essential, just as food, digestion, and exercise are essential to physical health. By these a man may excel in intellectual things, become mentally vigorous and healthy. Now, obeying the physical laws will not make a man wise or intellectual; but obedience to the mental laws, which regulate the mind.

3. *We are under moral laws, as accountable beings.* Now these laws are revealed in the Holy Scriptures. These respect our conduct to God, ourselves, and our fellowmen. In the New Testament economy, all moral excellency is to be based on faith in God; believing the truth of his love to us in Christ Jesus; a belief of his paternal goodness, and merciful and gracious character as our Redeemer. With this is to be connected repentance for past sins; faith or reliance on the great sacrifice of Christ Jesus; turning from evil to good, and walking in the commandments and ordinances of his word, by the promised aid of his Holy Spirit. Now, we may obey the physical and intellectual laws, and yet rebel against God's moral laws, and thus be sinners and transgressors of the holy statutes of the Most High. Let us,

II. Look at the result of obedience to the laws of God. Let us take each law, and look at it separately.

1. *Attention and obedience to physical laws will be generally followed by bodily enjoyments, and the comforts of sense.* We say generally, because we inherit many bodily weaknesses and diseases from our parents, which we may not be able to avoid; but these will be materially ameliorated by a strict regard to the material laws of God.

2. *Attention and obedience to the laws of mind, and we may become mentally vigorous.* Grow in knowledge and intellectual power, and thus be fraught with all the happiness and pleasure which intellectuality confers.

3. *But attention and obedience to the moral laws of God, will be followed by moral enjoyments, both in this life and that which is to come.*

Now, by obedience to these, we shall have,

(1.) An assurance of God's favor. This may be established upon this triple foundation. God must necessarily approve of that which resembles himself, and honors his blessed laws. His word assures us that obedience to him shall, through the merits of Christ, secure his approbation. If ye be willing and obedient, &c. In keeping his commandments there is great reward, "Whoso doeth the will of my Father," &c. He will give his Holy Spirit to them who obey him, as an earnest of his love, to witness, &c.; to guide into all truth, &c.

(2.) We shall have tranquillity of conscience; peace within; a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, &c.

(3.) We shall be interested in all the precious promises. Now, these are bright and numerous as the stars of heaven; re-

fer both to body and soul—time and eternity.

(4.) We shall finally have everlasting life; a place, a mansion, a throne, at God's right hand; eternal glory; celestial joys and pleasures forevermore. But with all these advantages and unspeakable blessings, if we neglect the physical laws, we may have sickness, misfortunes, &c.; or the mental laws, we may be ignorant; for there must be obedience to each to secure all the good of the whole.

APPLICATION.

1. *A correct understanding of this subject will enable us to clear the divine government of very much of the suffering of the world.* A very great portion arises from men disobeying God's wise and benevolent laws. Let us not charge God, therefore, foolishly.

2. *We shall understand why our prayers are often not answered.* We ask amiss, inasmuch as we do not act conformably thereto. If we pray for health, and disregard regimen, air, exercise, &c.; for knowledge, and neglect reading, study, &c.; for comfort, and do not live in holy obedience to his revealed will.

3. *The laws which govern us now, will do so forever.* Our resurrection bodies will be freed from the seeds of disease, and living in an atmosphere of health, will never be sick. Our minds free and etherealized in the heaven of light, we shall dwell in high intellectual splendor. The moral powers all holy, will delight in God, in the services of the heavenly temple, and the society of the redeemed forever.

PARADISE RESTORED.

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."—EPH. i. 11.

WE have previously considered paradise given, and paradise lost.* Our text leads us to the contemplation of paradise regained. Observe the various parts of the text.

(1.) The inheritance is, doubtless, the whole of that salvation which God has provided for a lost world. The consummation of this, is the heavenly state. Eternal glory.

* Pages 53 and 55.

(2.) This inheritance is specified as being in Christ. "In whom," &c., see verse 10. It is said, "This is the true God, and eternal life."

(3.) This inheritance is given to a special people; those who were predestinated according to God's purpose. God purposed and fore-appointed that all believers, and such only, should have everlasting life, verses 12, 13.

(4.) This inheritance is in present possession; in title; in the earnest, or first-fruits. Such are the various portions of this passage of the sacred writer. Let us now consider,

I. THE NATURE OF THIS INHERITANCE.
II. HOW IT HAS BEEN PROCURED. And
III. HOW IT BECOMES OURS.

I. THE NATURE OF THIS INHERITANCE. Now, the inheritance which the gospel reveals to us may be considered,

1. *In its resemblance to that we lost in Adam.* That included,

(1.) The divine approbation. God beheld man with complacency and delight. He was the object of God's favor. The light of the divine countenance was the joyful portion of our first parents. By sin this was lost. God could not thus favorably behold iniquity; he could not thus approve of a traitor—a rebel. Now, Christ has regained, on behalf of the ungodly, the divine favor. God can look on the guilty through Christ, and justify them freely by his grace. God appears toward our race as a God of love; not armed with an avenging rod, but holding forth a sceptre of grace.

(2.) This inheritance includes the divine image. Sin effaced this; man reflected the mind of the evil one; he became possessed of the spirit of Satan. This moral image of God is restored by regenerating grace. Born again; born from above; renewed by the purifying power of the Holy Ghost, Col. iii. 10.

(3.) A place in the divine family. The fall was followed by expulsion from Eden's happy scenes. Man became an outcast literally, but still more morally. "By grace man is brought nigh," &c. Eph. ii. 19; constituted a part of the family of God. "Because ye are sons," &c. "Behold what manner of love," &c. This inheritance includes,

(4.) Divine fellowship. God had holy intercourse with man; man had communion

with God. Sin dissolved it—broke it off. In redemption it is regained. The soul has access to God; see also 1 John i. 3. This inheritance includes,

(5.) The divine bounty. God's munificence was strikingly exhibited in paradise. How rich the portion he gave to man! But what can equal our gospel inheritance? It includes all possible good. "He now gives grace and glory." "My God shall supply all," &c. "All are yours; ye are Christ's," &c.

(6.) The friendly sympathies and services of the angels. In innocency these were the companions of man; but through sin they were the executioners of God's displeasure. In redemption, they again assume the aspect of friendship and love. They rejoice in the sinner's conversion. They are all ministering spirits, &c. And they conduct believers, when they die, to the realms of glory. Let us now observe in what,

2. *This inheritance is dissimilar to the one we lost in Adam.*

(1.) In many things that was a temporal—in most things this is a spiritual one. That was a temporal Eden—material fruits, &c. This is a spiritual inheritance. One for the mind—one within the soul.

(2.) That was an inheritance on earth. The New Testament inheritance, in its completion and glory, is reserved in heaven, and, therefore, is much more exalted and glorious. Not at God's footstool, but by his side—in his palace. Not a paradise in the region of the material creation, and the lower animals, but with angels, &c.

(3.) That was an inheritance that depended on man's righteous obedience, and rested on himself. The New Testament inheritance is given through the merits of another, and the grace of God is freely given to make us meet for its everlasting enjoyment. No tempter there—cannot be lost. We ask,

II. How has this inheritance been procured? By the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ. We lost the first by the sin of Adam; we obtain the second by the obedience of Jesus. By the first Adam we became poor, and wretched, and liable to death; the second Adam came to give us rest, and peace, and eternal life. Cursed in the first, we are redeemed from the curse by the second. Lost by the first, we are redeemed by the second. Rom. v. 18, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,' &c. "In the fulness of the times," &c.

III. How this inheritance, this paradise regained, becomes ours. "In whom," &c. This paradise regained does not become ours in a variety of ways. We cannot buy it, or merit it; nor is it given irrespective of any medium.

1. *This inheritance is given to us by God.* And thus the gospel announces it; calls our attention to it; urges our reception of it, &c. But this inheritance,

2. *Is given through faith in Jesus Christ.* Receiving Christ, we become fellow-heirs with Christ. By faith in Christ, we become sons of God, and heirs of eternal life. Jesus and the inheritance go together. Rejecting the one, we also reject the other. "Whosoever believeth," &c. The text speaks of it as being ours, now "obtained." Christians have the title now—the earnest now—and the bright assurance now, of its enjoyment forever.

APPLICATION.

1. *What ground for universal praise.* The new paradise revealed and offered in the gospel.

2. *What cause of Christian rejoicing.* We have experimental possession.

3. *What a subject for blissful hope.* In its blissful consummation in the eternal world.

VALUE OF EXPERIENCE IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

"He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."—John ix. 25.

The text is the language of the man who received his sight from Christ, to the cavilling, unbelieving Jews. Nicodemus had said to Christ, "We know that thou art," &c. Of these miracles, some were of the most astonishing kind. That of healing the leper by a word—of raising the dead—and giving sight to the blind. Yet, such was the perverseness and prejudice of the Jews, that they began to discuss the question of Christ's personal holiness, instead of admiring and rejoicing in the wonderful and benevolent miracle which he had just wrought. All these points the young man left the Jews to settle among themselves.

He testified of his own experience—of what he had seen, and heard, and felt. "One thing," &c. Thousands of Christians are, with this person, quite unable to discuss the peculiar points of theological controversy. They may not be able to overthrow the sophistry of the skeptic, nor answer all his objections to the Christian scheme; but this they can do, they can testify of the power and grace of Christ, and can say, "Whereas I was blind," &c. Our subject is personal experience in matters of religion. Consider, then,

I. THE NATURE OF THIS EXPERIENCE. It is an experience,

1. *Of an entire change.* "Once blind." Ignorant of God and ourselves; ignorant of the truths and blessings of religion; ignorant of duties and privileges. This blindness was natural to our former state. "Now see." Eyes opened. Once all dark—now light. Now see our condition—misery—peril; see our remedy—help, &c.; see the way of happiness and safety. It is the experience,

2. *Of the most important change.* What earthly good to be compared to sight? One invaluable blessing desired by the blind, that "our eyes may be opened," &c. Important to our enjoyment of God and his works, both of creation, providence, and grace; to our well-being and eternal salvation.

3. *Of a divine change.* Not a self-effected one; not one produced by a fellow-creature, &c. 2 Cor. iv. 6.

4. *Of a most merciful and gracious change.* Not deserved—not merited, &c. Free, "without money," &c.

5. *A change effected by the most unlikely means.* The anointing of the clay, &c., seemed likely rather to effect blindness than to cure it. No virtue, either, in the clay, nor the waters of the pool, &c. Therefore it was not an ordinary cure by medicinal means. They were used to test his obedience. Now, the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ as a crucified malefactor, was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Learning, philosophy, morality, penance, any thing rather than this. This, however—God's plan—abases the sinner. He cannot glory. God is honored, and man saved. Such, then, is the change experienced. Let us consider,

II. THE TESTIMONY SUCH EXPERIENCE YIELDS, AS TO THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. This man bore testimony to the miraculous power of Christ, and in this to his messiahship and divinity. The Jews had the most satisfactory evidence given by him. It could not be illusion, nor wilful deception. He bore about him proof; he was surrounded by those who knew him, both before and after his recovery from blindness. Now, let us examine the testimony which is given by Christians, as their experience, to the influence of religion on their own hearts.

1. *Their testimony relates to what is personal and conscious.* Not any supposed theory, &c.; but what they know and feel. They know their state is entirely changed, &c.

2. *Their testimony is impartial.* It is not their interest to deceive, or to be deceived. Confers no temporal dignity or advantage; generally the reverse.

3. *Their testimony is harmonious.* Christians of all ages, and of all ranks, speak of the same things—enjoy the same blessings. It may be objected, that there is diversity of sentiment, and that they are not all agreed. They are agreed as to the reality of religion—as to the blessings they have received. The mode may have differed, as in Bartimeus and the young man; as in Lydia and Saul of Tarsus.

4. *Their testimony is established by external evidences.* The young man could see. This they might prove or disprove. So Christians profess to be enlightened—now do they walk in light? to be saved from the power of Satan—now is their life altered? Is malevolence exchanged for love? wrath for meekness? sin for holiness? Here, then, their fruit is seen, &c.

5. *Their testimony is borne under all circumstances.* If only under exciting occasions, then it would be suspicious. If only in the day of prosperity, also suspicious, &c.; but in solitude—in adversity—in sickness—in death. Myriads have testified with their dying breath, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn that it is the duty of believers to bear witness for Christ, and of his power to save.* It should be done verbally; but especially in our tempers, conversation, and lives. Gratitude and love to Christ should induce us. Love to our fellow-men.

2. *Urge the reception of this evidence, and the use of the means the gospel proclaims upon all.*

3. *The rejection of this evidence exhibits the enmity of the carnal mind, and the power of sinful prejudice in the soul.*

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."—Acts ii. 42.

The previous portion of the chapter describes the sermon of the apostle Peter to the assembled Jews on the day of Pentecost; the effects the sermon produced; and the baptism of those who were converted; and then the order and character of that fellowship which they adopted and steadfastly maintained. On this occasion, we purpose to notice church fellowship, in its nature, duties, and advantages; and meet some objections of those who neglect it.

I. Church fellowship in its nature.

1. *It is a voluntary fellowship.* When persons unite from free choice; influenced only by truth and love. It presupposes that men are not naturally of this fellowship—not born into it; but come out of the world freely to associate and unite with God's people.

2. *It is a fellowship of faith.* It cannot consist of any really but true believers. Such only have fellowship with Christ; such only are spiritual persons; such only members of Christ's body—branches of the true vine.

3. *It is the fellowship of obedience.* Obedience to the commands of Christ. "Go ye, and teach," &c. "Teaching them to observe all things," &c. Several duties are specified in the text, which belong especially to the church of Christ.

(1.) The apostles' "doctrine;" the great truths concerning Christ and salvation; those doctrines which they had heard and received from the apostles. To hold the truth, and to grow in it, is of vital importance. Not one truth of temporary importance; especially the great cardinal doctrine of salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus.

(2.) "Fellowship;" intercourse of life and heart; where the same exercises are pursued and mutually regarded. But the word also means "communication," or beneficence, Rom. xv. 26; Heb. xiii. 16.

(3.) "Breaking of bread." Or, as the Syriac version renders it, of the eucharist—evidently the Lord's Supper. Hence, at the origin of this institution, "Christ," it is said, "took bread, brake it," &c., Acts xx. 7.

(4.) "In prayer." Publicly offering up their supplications and intercessions for the blessing of God, and the salvation of the world. In these we see a beautiful exhibition of what a church should be. The first day of the week arrives; the disciples are gathered together; the pastor, or elder, or bishop presides; the doctrines of Christ are expounded, or preached; the truth exhibited. Then the wants of the necessitous are supplied; the gospel influencing the heart, and filling it with Christian goodness and liberality. Then the Lord's Supper is administered—prayer presented—a hymn sung—and the company retire, blessing God, and edified and built up in their holy faith. Steadfast—constant—persevering—regular. Let us look,

II. At the duties Christian fellowship involves.

1. *The duty of regular intercourse.* "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." "As iron sharpeneth iron, so does the," &c.

> "How did my heart rejoice to hear
> My friends devoutly say,
> In Zion let us all appear,
> And keep the solemn day."

Neglect, fraught with evil to the pastor, members, and especially to their own souls.

2. *Exhibition of Christian affection.* This is the command, "Little children, love one another." "Walk in love." Fellowship and love influence each other—promote one another.

3. *Christian admonition and exhortation.* "Admonish one another," &c. "Exhort one another," &c. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother," &c.; nor in any wise suffer sin upon him.

4. *Christian help.* "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Ye that are strong, bear the burdens of the weak; ye rich, the poor; ye wise, the ignorant; ye fathers, the children, &c. "Do good unto all men," &c.

III. The advantages of Christian fellowship.

1. *It tends to our improvement.* In knowledge—wisdom—grace—zeal, &c.

2. *To our comfort.* More company; the way more pleasant and lightsome. In joy

some to rejoice; in sorrow, some to weep; in straits, some to console; in difficulties, some to help; in sickness and conflict, some to visit and cheer, or pray.

3. *It will tend to our security.* Safer, for two are better, &c. Besides, there are many church promises, Eccles. iv. 9.

IV. Answer some objections of those who neglect church fellowship.

1. *We would unite, if the church were pure.* That it is not, is to be admitted—mourned over—lamented, &c. Never has been. You would have objected to Christ's church, because of the carnal views of the disciples—denial of Peter—betrayal of Judas, &c. I fear such are filled with the spirit of self-righteousness, deceiving their own souls.

2. *Such diversity, we know not which to choose.* But this is not a good reason for neglecting all. Parent's neglecting to educate, or have his child apprenticed, because of so many trades. Take up the word of God, and try them by it; that most scriptural—most like Christ's, and the first churches. Only one way to heaven, &c.

3. *We can get to heaven without it.* Where is it written? Perhaps there are those who can; the sick—the invalid—the exile; but can you? If so, what kind of heaven? For there is fellowship, communion, and perfect bliss in the Christian's heaven. Had you not better be introduced on earth? Christ says his church is a family—flock—army, &c. Others say,

4. *They are not fit for church fellowship.* Then not fit for the sick bed—for the valley of death—for eternity. Christ can make you so. He desires to do it; he waits to do it now; his heart—arm—Spirit, &c., all ready. "Wilt thou be made whole?"

APPLICATION.

1. *To those now united with God's people.* Be steadfast, &c. Hold fast. Cleave, &c.

2. *To those wavering, now determine.* Do not delay, especially the young.

3. *Sinners, begin to reflect.* Your fellowship with the workers of iniquity is debasing, ruinous, and will terminate in the misery of a crowded, black, and everlasting perdition. Go not with a multitude to do evil, and thus perish forever.

SALVATION IN ZION

"I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory."—Isaiah xlvi. 13.

It is clear that the 12th and 13th verses refer to the gospel dispensation, and the salvation, or way of righteousness, that should therein be published. By reading Romans i. 16, 17, and, in connection with both, Romans iii. 21. In the gospel, God's righteousness is brought near; that is, the way of righteousness—the offer of righteousness, &c. That which seemed impossible under the law—and was really so by the deeds of the law—is now adapted to the misery and exigencies of mankind, and offered to all who believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the divinely-appointed time arrived—the period described as "the fulness of the times"—then the salvation came. It did not tarry; it was not delayed; but God sent it forth in the person of his own Son, who came and redeemed those who were under the law, that they might obtain the adoption of sons. Then follows the text, "And I will place salvation," &c.

I. A description of the church and people of God. "Zion." "Israel, my glory."

II. The gracious declaration. "I will place salvation," &c.

I. A description of the church and people of God. "Zion." Zion was the name of the loftiest mountain on which the city of Jerusalem was built, and was applied especially to the holy temple, as the place of the assembling of the tribes of Israel. Many very beautiful sayings are recorded of Zion. It is called the "Holy hill of Zion." "The joy of the whole earth is Zion." "Praise waits for thee, O God, out of Zion." "The Lord hath chosen Zion, and there will he dwell," &c. "The Lord bless thee out of Zion." "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion," &c. "Oh that salvation were come out of Zion." Now, these beautiful passages obviously refer to Zion as the ancient church of God—the place of sacrifice and worship, where God manifested his glory. The New Testament church is described by the apostle, "Ye are come to Mount Zion," &c., Hebrews xii. 22. Whatever distinguished Zion of old is still more prominently associated with the New Testament Zion—the Christian church.

(1.) Had they a *priesthood*—we have the great, and last, and perpetual High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, &c.

(2.) Had they a *sacrifice*—we have the one great sacrifice for sin, the Lamb of God, &c.

(3.) Had they the *varied* and *rich furniture* of the tabernacle, and afterwards of the temple—we have the substance of the whole; a living *altar*—living *bread*—a real *ark*—the true *mercy-seat*.

(4.) Had they the *symbol* of the divine glory—we have the glory itself. "The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person."

(5.) Had they *prophecy*—we have a more sure word of prophecy, life, and immortality, &c.

(6.) Had they God in their midst; did he dwell in Zion—we have now the perpetual presence of the Spirit; abiding with the church forever; we have the substance, the reality, &c.—the end of the thing signified.

2. *The text also describes God's people.* "Israel, my glory." Now, God is the glory of Israel; he is the glory of his people Israel. But this is the opposite view. "The church is God's glory;" the pious, who constitute the true church, are the glory of God.

(1.) For such, he redeemed them. "This people have I formed for myself, that they may show forth," &c.; and the apostles, "That ye should show forth his praise," &c.

(2.) The church is compared to those things considered great and glorious; see Isaiah liv. 11. By the apostle John likened to a golden candlestick. The Lord describes his church as his portion, and his people as his jewels.

(3.) By the church, the glory of God is reflected to the world. Her garments are beautiful, like the king's daughter, all glorious within, &c. The mercy, grace, and holiness of God are seen in the church. Hear what the Saviour says: "Herein is my Father glorified, if ye bear much fruit," &c.; see John xvii. 22. God is denied—his name blasphemed—his works forgotten—his word rejected—his worship refused by the ungodly world; but he is acknowledged, revered, adored, worshipped, exalted, and glorified by his church and people. What condescension in Deity to represent his people as his glory! Are there not cherubim and seraphim, and the glorified hosts, too, in heaven? Yet, he looks down upon his believing, praying, obedient people on earth, and declares that they are "His glory." Now, let us consider,

II. The gracious declaration. "I will place salvation." Now, four particulars are included in this sentence of the text.

1. *Salvation.* Included both redemption from evil, and the bestowal of the blessings we need. The salvation of the gospel is salvation from sin and all its accursed effects, and salvation into holiness and all its blessed results. Salvation from guilt—from condemnation—from pollution—from vassalage—from debasement. Salvation into God's favor, love, likeness, kingdom, and glory. Salvation of the soul and of the body. The glorification of the one at death, and of the other at the resurrection of the just. The eternal felicity of both united in heaven forever and ever.

2. *Now this salvation is divine.* "I will place salvation," &c. The salvation of God originated in his eternal purpose of grace and mercy. The exhibition of infinite love. Laid upon his own Son; brought by his own arm; published by his own word; effected by his own Spirit. In every sense it is God's. The contrivance of the eternal Father; the work of his co-equal Son; the application of it by the Holy Spirit; the wonder of angels—the joy of sinners—the confusion of devils—but the *work* of God.

3. *This salvation is to be placed in Zion.* Now, we must look at this subject literally and spiritually. *Literally*—Salvation was placed in Zion. The types and prophecies predicting it were delivered and exhibited in Zion. The germ was planted in the Jewish church—watered with the tears and prayers of the pious, from Abraham to Zechariah and Simeon. Let us read one or two of the passages. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation-stone." Especially Isaiah xl. 9, "O Zion, thou that bringest glad tidings," &c. Obadiah says, "Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness," &c. Zechariah says, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for lo! I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." Now all these were literally fulfilled. Christ, the Saviour, was not only a Jew—a son of Zion—but he came to Zion; he appeared in their synagogues, and streets, and cities, and temple

He offered his blessing to the children of Zion. After his death, *salvation* was first proclaimed here; "Begin *at Jerusalem*." Here were the first fruits of his blessed kingdom — the first converts — the first church; salvation was *placed* here. But look at the text *spiritually*. Salvation is particularly in his church. Here is the presence of the Saviour, "Lo, I am with you," &c. "Wherever two or three," &c. His gospel and word are here; his ordinances are here, too, to be perpetuated. In connection with these salvation is chiefly effected. Here, too, the salvation of God's people is completed in their sanctification and preservation from the power of the devil, &c.

4. *The persons for whom this salvation is to be placed in Zion.* "For Israel." To the Jew first, then also to the Gentile. For all partakers of Abraham's faith, whether his lineal or spiritual seed, Gal. vii. 9, and iv. 28. Salvation is for every one that believeth—that receives the testimony, the record given, of God's Son. "Whoso believeth with the heart, and confesseth," &c.

LEARN,

1. *The dignity of the children of God.* "The glory of the Lord," &c.

2. *The responsibility of the church.* In it is salvation. Storehouse of the bread of life; fountain of living water; the citadel of the Christian army. On it rests the conversion of the world, and the extension of Christ's cause; the heathen—the unconverted at home—the rising age.

3. *We proclaim this salvation to every believer to-day.*

ZION, THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY.

"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined."—PSALM l. 2.

ZION was a mountain connected with several others, on part of which the temple was erected. This appellation was, however, often given to the whole city of Jerusalem, especially when she was described in her religious character, or in connection with her religious ordinances. "Glorious things are spoken of thee." "Great is the Lord," &c. Ps. xlviii. 1, &c.; see also Ps. cxxxii. 13. Isaiah also refers to it, xxxiii. 20, "Look upon Zion," &c. Mount Zion, however, was typical of the church of Christ; and as such, the apostle observes "Ye are come unto Mount Zion," &c. Heb. xii. 23. It is to this application of the text that we shall call your attention. Observe,

I. A TWOFOLD REPRESENTATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD. "Zion, and the perfection of beauty."

II. THE GLORIOUS FACT AFFIRMED RESPECTING IT. "Out of Zion, &c. God hath shined."

I. A TWOFOLD REPRESENTATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD. By the Church of God, we here give the greatest latitude to the term which it can legitimately bear. We mean the congregation of the Lord's people, of every age and country; the universal family of his children, from the beginning to the end of time. We are to consider this church,

1. *In its representation as Zion.* And as such it may be considered,

(1.) On account of its exalted *visibility*. Mount Zion was elevated above the surrounding country; seen afar off. Now this is to be one grand characteristic of God's church. It is to be visible—city se on a hill; hence often called "the moun tain of the Lord," &c.

(2.) As the *chosen* hill of the Lord. "The Lord hath chosen it," &c. It is called the hill of the Lord. "God loveth the gates of Zion," &c. Now, all this in the highest degree will apply to the church. The church is the chosen residence of Deity; an habitation for God; the delight of the Lord.

(3.) As distinguished for its *immoveable stability*. See Psalm xlviii. 12, 13. Now, such is the church of God. God its defence and fortress. "The gates of hell," &c. "No weapon," &c. Lived in the midst of combined earthly and hellish foes, yet has survived all her enemies, and she is destined to fill the whole earth with her glory. But Zion is said,

2. *To be the perfection of beauty.* See Psalm xlviii. 2. Now, the church of God is the perfection of beauty,

(1.) In her ministering attendants. The garments of the priesthood were peculiarly striking and interesting. Every part, too, was expressive of God's great designs. The flowing robe—the breastplate—the mitre—the musical bells, &c.; yet all these were

but shadows of the good things of the gospel, Isaiah lii. 7.

(2.) For the virtues and graces of her members. In the world there may be much that is gorgeous and splendid—much that is striking and useful in art, science, and literature, &c. There have been men renowned for patriotism and philanthropy, and some for their stern adhesion to justice and truth. But the perfection of beauty is that heavenly holiness with which Christ clothes his people; the graces of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is," &c. Gal. v. 22.

(3.) In her delightful and celestial dispensations, ordinances, &c. Look at her on the day of her solemn assemblies! Behold her in her devotional services! In her praises, &c. In her communion at the table of the Lord. In her fellowship.

II. THE GLORIOUS FACT AFFIRMED. "Out of Zion," &c. Then God is in Zion; it is his rest. He dwelt between the cherubim. There was the cloud, &c.; the oracles, &c. Now God hath shined out of Zion.

1. *In the person and ministry of his Son.* Jesus came as the representative of the Deity, full of grace and truth. He came as the light of the world. All the glories of the divine nature shone in his countenance; all subjects became irradiated, &c., by his divine beams.

2. *In the principles and doctrines of the gospel.* Would you see the divine glory? look at the divine mind? Look into the gospel mirror, 2 Cor. iii. 18; see also 2 Cor. iv. 6.

3. *In the spirit and truths of his word.* The entrance of his word gives light; "light shining in a dark place." This is the Spirit's revelation of Jesus Christ. Here the things and glories of Christ are manifested; and by this word dwelling in us we are sanctified and made meet, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Are you connected with Zion?* Do you form a part of the holy congregation? Are you sons and daughters of Zion? Born in her?

2. *If so, do you seek her weal, and labor for her prosperity?* Has she your prayers, &c.?

3. *We invite those who are without to unite with the people of God.* Unite in her holy associations, and enjoy her privileges and blessings. "Come with us, and we will do you good," &c.

DEVOTED ATTACHMENT TO THE CHURCH.

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."—PSALM CXXXVII. 5, 6.

IT is difficult to decide who was the writer of this psalm, probably Jeremiah; it refers to the period of Israel's captivity in Babylon, and relates the feelings and circumstances of that afflicted people. Former associations and attachments were present in their thoughts and affections, verse 1. Probably the Levites are referred to, who were singers in the temple, but now they have suspended their harps on the willows. Whether they wandered by the rivers to meditate, or were employed to labor, this is uncertain. Thus, in deep adversity, their oppressors required them to sing one of their holy national songs. They remonstrated on the unreasonableness of the demand; it was insulting adversity, adding anguish to suffering. Then the writer breaks forth in the ardent language of the text, "If I forget," &c. It is pleasing to observe the burning embers of this holy patriotism among the Jews to this day, even now they do not forget Zion. And doubtless to that land and city God will assuredly restore them. But Jerusalem was an emblem of the church; the true Jerusalem from above, the mother of us all. Let us emulate the pious Jew in his attachment and exclamation in regard to God's church, "If I forget," &c. Let us consider the nature, the evidences, and the grounds of the Christian's attachment to the church of God.

I. THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S ATTACHMENT TO THE CHURCH OF GOD.

1. *It is a spiritual attachment.* Church, God's spiritual house—its servants, &c., are spiritual—its inhabitants are spiritual persons—God's Holy Spirit dwells in it. Now one of the fruits of the Spirit is love—love to God, love to the saints, love to the whole church. It is therefore the result of the Spirit's operations on the soul and mind, of the Spirit dwelling in us. Any

other principle, such as display, creed, name, &c., worthless.

2. *This attachment is fervent.* The whole phraseology is of a warm, glowing kind—the affections excited, heart enamored, not mere regard, approbation, or esteem, but devoted adhesion and attachment—an affection like that of a mother to her child, or like a man to his bosom friend.

3. *This attachment is self-denying.* "If I prefer not," &c. In this way the depth and extent of pure affection may be tested. Self is so prominent, that it will reign unless another takes the heart, and then self is crucified. Paul and his righteousness, but afterwards Christ and his cross. What would I sacrifice for Zion?—a little pleasure, a little wealth, a little toil. What can be refused if it be preferred to our chief joy? But this necessarily leads us to the next general topic.

II. THE EVIDENCES OF PRESENT ATTACHMENT TO THE CHURCH OF GOD.

1. *Affectionate remembrances.* "If I forget," &c. Objects of no interest are soon forgotten. The memory retains the things on which the heart is set. The mariner forgets not his home and friends. The miser forgets not his gold. The student forgets not his books. The mother forgets not her child, &c. The patriotic Christian cannot forget the church, the kingdom of Jesus. If distant from her courts, yet he does not forget. If confined in a chamber of affliction, he does not forget; his heart's warmest emotions are identified with her.

2. *Delight in her services.* How differently minded are the worshippers of any Christian sanctuary! With many it is a load, the Sabbath a weariness. With others it is conscientious labor—with others it is a mere form; but with the true Christian it is his delight and pleasure, "I was glad when they said," &c. "I had rather be a door-keeper," &c.

"I have been there, and oft would go," &c.

3. *Exertion for her welfare.* If the attachment is sincere, then, like Nehemiah, the service of Jerusalem will greatly influence the mind. What can I do for Zion? Here am I, Lord, employ me as thou wilt. There will be no fastidiousness, no movements by fits and starts, the heart will influence every faculty and power, both of body and soul. The feet, shoulders, hands, the means, the influence, all, all will be cheerfully consecrated.

4. *Sympathy with its condition.* The law of sympathy is marvellous. How we are affected by the misery of a fellow-creature, but if an acquaintance much more, a dear friend how much more still! Now see this in the case of Nehemiah, ii. 2, &c. But afterwards he was all vigor and exertion in rearing her walls, and then all joy at the completion of their undertaking. This threefold sympathy of sorrow, effort, and joy.

5. *Prayer for her prosperity.* The Christian remembers Zion at the throne of grace. On the arms of faith and prayer he bears it up before God. "Lord, remember Zion." "Answer, and have mercy," &c.

"My soul shall pray for Zion still
While life or breath remains,
There my best friends and kindred dwell,
There God my Saviour reigns."

III. THE GROUNDS OF THIS ATTACHMENT. These are very numerous.

1. *It is the Christian's birth-place.* He was spiritually born in her. Ah, he says, I went ignorant, cold, unbelieving, hopeless, &c. The word distilled as the dew, &c.; it opened my eyes, softened my heart, won my affections, renewed my soul; there the Spirit revealed Christ to me, and formed him in me. There I first drew the breath of prayer. "If I forget Jerusalem," &c.

2. *It has been the place of divine manifestations.* Often God has met me there, in perplexity, in sorrow, in bereavements, in distress, in weakness. Often the place of banqueting, of holy visions, of heavenly anticipations. "If I forget Jerusalem," &c.

3. *It is the dwelling of my best friends.* How have I joyed to go up with the sons and daughters of Zion! What sympathy there has existed! Similar necessities, perils, desires, feelings, and similar enjoyments, &c. Heard the sacred word, knelt before the same throne, sang the same praises, met at the same communion. "If I forget Jerusalem," &c.

4. *It is the object of the Saviour's highest love.* Is not Jesus the husband of his church, the foundation of Zion? Hath he not redeemed it? does he not dwell in it? is it not his care, his treasure, his delight, his reward? Engraven on the palms of

his hands, dearer than the apple of the eye. Oh then, "If I forget Jerusalem," &c.

5. *It is the hope of the world.* Church, is the light in the darkness, the salt in the putrescence of impurity, the very pillar of our globe, all visions of future glory are crowned with the church. The waters must go forth—the light, the power, of the Saviour. Then, "If I forget," &c.

1. To the true friends—cherish this feeling.

2. To the indifferent professor—examine, &c.

3. Invite sinners to unite with the church of Christ.

CHRISTIAN SOCIALITY.

"For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee."—PSALM cxxii. 8.

THE importance of the social principle was recognised by Jehovah in that declaration made at the formation of Eve, "It is not good for man," &c. Based on the conjugal union and resulting from it were the relative compacts, in which the same kindred were united in the bonds of amity together. The sociality of neighborhood or locality was the next form which it assumed. But there is also a spiritual circle of social excellency, in many respects superior to all others; that, based on supreme love to God and unfeigned love to one another. This is referred to in another psalm, "I am a companion of all," &c. Jesus also bestowed peculiar honor on this. When one said, "Thy mother and brethren stand without," he said, stretching his hand over the people, "Whoso doeth the will of my Father," &c. This is frequently included in the metaphorical descriptions of the church—a flock—a family—a company of pilgrims—an army. This is most beautifully described in Acts ii. 44, &c. Let us notice,

I. THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S SOCIAL COMPACT. "My brethren and companions." You perceive there is,

1. *Identity of nature.* "Brethren," partakers of the same *spiritual nature;* having the same *heavenly Father;* bearing the same *divine likeness;* being imbued with the same *spirit;* known by the same *holy designation.* "Saints," "children," "heirs," &c.

2. *There is mutual association.* "Companions." Engaged in the same pursuits: travelling in the same road: sharing in the same perils: enjoying the same bliss: feeling the same sympathies! How all these observations apply to the Christian's social circle! They go to the *same ordinances;* engage in the *same exercises;* meet before the *same throne;* are baptized into the *same Spirit;* animated with the *same hopes.* Let us advert,

II. TO SOME OF THE OBVIOUS PECULIARITIES AND DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN'S SOCIAL COMPACT. It is a compact not grounded on relative association, or local occurrences. Not established by legislation. This compact of godly people,

1. *Is quite voluntary in its formation.* The result of free choice, the movement of the will and affections. There is invitation on one side, "Come thou with us," &c. There is happy acquiescence on the other, "We will go with you," &c. "This people shall be our people," &c.

2. *It is spiritual in its nature.* Not grounded on mere mental or political principles, but on the enjoyment of the same spirit. Having the same moral nature and desires. Being of one heart and soul. This unity is thus described by the apostle Paul, Eph. iv. 3, &c.

3. *It is connected with mutual obligations.* There must (1.) Be unfeigned Christian love. "Love one another with pure hearts," &c. "Whoso loveth is born of God," &c. "By this," &c. (2.) Mutual sympathy and dependence. "Rejoice with," &c. Hence the metaphor of the human body; see 1 Cor. xii. 13, &c., see ver. 25. (3.) Mutual prayers. Pray ye one for another. (4.) Mutual help. "Do good," &c. How the apostle James urges beneficence and charity! The wise are to be eyes to the ignorant. The strong to bear the burdens of the weak. "Bear ye one another's burdens," &c. (5.) Mutual fellowship. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," &c. The flock cling to one another. "I was glad when they said unto me," &c. (6.) Mutual forbearance. Different degrees of knowledge; different degrees of grace; different dispositions and views. The imperfections of each and all demand this. Let me read that rich assemblage of graces and duties, Romans xii. 6, &c.

III. THE PRE-EMINENT DESIRE OF ALL WHO

BELONG TO THE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL COMPACT. "I will now say," &c. *Peace*, often signifies *harmony, prosperity, happiness.* All these are important to the church of Jesus. Unanimity, not uniformity. *Prosperity*, increase, growth, &c. *Happiness*, the enjoyment of God's favor, celestial light and love, &c. Now it is the pre-eminent desire of all true saints that this peace should be in the church. "I will now say," &c. (1.) I will say it to my own *heart.* I will guard my spirit, and temper, and conversation. I will restrain it with bit and bridle. (2.) I will say to the *church.* By my kind demeanor, courtesy, generosity, cheerfulness, readiness to serve, &c. (3.) I will say it *to God.* Oh, let it be so. I will pray for the peace of Jerusalem. My motto is this, I am for peace. I will labor, &c. Now I will do so for many reasons.

(1.) For my own sake; that I may dwell in an atmosphere of peace.

(2.) For the Saviour's sake, knowing how it pleaseth, &c.

(3.) For the world's sake. That they may exclaim, "How good and pleasant," &c. "See how those Christians love," &c.

(4.) For my brethren and companions' sake, that they may be happy and useful.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the text be sanctified to those who are brethren and companions in the way to the heavenly Zion.

2. Who will journey with us? Be our companions and brethren in the holy exercises and enjoyments of religion?

3. The companionship of the world is false, and sorrowful, and calamitous in its issue.

JEWISH LIBERALITY.

"The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses."—EXODUS XXXV. 29.

ONE of the most striking and honorable features in the character and history of the Jews, was that ardent and devoted attachment they manifested to the sanctuary of the Most High. Three instances are left on the records of inspiration illustrative of this. The first is the case to which the text refers. The second, the munificent liberality displayed in the erection of the temple, and the third when with holy patriotism and zeal they rebuilt that temple under the decree and patronage of Cyrus and Darius. Each of these instances will bear the strictest investigation, and we shall behold in the whole the most elevated, liberal, and fervid zeal, for the house and glory of the Lord. Our subject confines us to the first case on scripture record. Let us consider the object of their regard,—its peculiar characteristics,—and the lesson it suggests.

I. THE OBJECT OF THEIR REGARD. This was the tabernacle which was now in course of erection. Moses in an extended interview of forty days and forty nights with Jehovah in the mountain, received command to erect for the Lord a house. God said, "Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." And the work was to be undertaken with solemn consideration. "And look that thou make them after the pattern which was showed thee in the mount." Observe, then,

1. *The tabernacle was of divine appointment and construction.* Expressly revealed and undertaken by divine authority,—Jehovah was its artificer,—the glorious architect. Nothing was left to human fancy or ingenuity. The pattern of the whole was placed vividly before the eyes of Moses.

2. *The tabernacle was designed for the celebration of divine worship.* Here sacrifices were to be presented,—offerings brought,—praises celebrated,—prayers offered. Here the priests and Levites were to be in perpetual waiting. Here sacred festivals were to be held. Divine honors paid. This was to be the centre of attraction for Israel. The place of convocation for the pious. The rendezvous of the godly families of his people.

3. *The tabernacle was the place chosen for the more manifest display of the divine glory.* Just read Exod. xxix. 43, xl. 33.

4. *The tabernacle was the place of blessing to the righteous.* The guilty repaired here, and in connection with confession and supplication, and the offerings they brought, and the faith they exercised, they obtained mercy. God was propitious. He verified his promise, made his name manifest, "The Lord merciful," &c. The impure repaired here, and were cleansed. A variety of washings, and the application of the blood of the slain victims, were employed in the

ceremonial purification of the unclean. The pious here were especially blessed. God directed that the priest should go forth to the congregation and bless them in his great and holy name, see Numb. vi. 22. Now, brethren, not to multiply particulars, we see how beautifully applicable all this is to the assemblies of Christian worshippers. Do we not meet by the divine appointment and authority? Do we not meet to present worship to the Most High? Here is to be brought the sacrifice of a broken heart, &c. Here praise, and prayer, and adoration, are to ascend to the blessed God. Does not God manifest himself here, as he does not, &c. Is it not often our privilege to sing with the poet:—

> "I've seen thy glory and thy power,
> Through all thy temple shine;
> My God, repeat that heavenly hour,
> That vision so divine."

"One thing have I desired," &c. Is not the house of God a place of blessing to our souls? Here we have come guilty, and found mercy. Here wretched, and have been made happy,—sorrowful, and have gone away rejoicing. Has it not been the house of God, and the gate of heaven? He brought us into his banqueting house, &c. Having noticed the object of their regards, let us look,

II. At its characteristics. Observe in reference to the regard manifested to the tabernacle by the children of Israel. That it was,

1. *Cheerful and voluntary.* "Whose heart made them," &c. Here we have the fountain right, no wonder the stream was so. The heart loved and delighted in it, and this made them willing. The heart is the lever which moves the whole man. In religion the heart is every thing. Without it, there is no acceptable piety. No attachment is worth any thing where the heart is not the constraining power. This attachment,

2. *Was palpable and demonstrative.* "Brought a willing offering," &c. The offering was the evidence. God will not have his people to appear before him empty. These offerings had two peculiar features.

(1.) Their variety. "All kinds of work." Look at ver. 21, &c.

(2.) Then the generality or perhaps the universality of the offerings. "Every man and woman,"—the rich and the poor,—the young and the old,—from the highest to the lowest. It could not have been done by the few, but was easily effected by the many. Every heart, every hand, &c. The aged sire, and the little child.

3. *This attachment was generous and munificent.* They denied themselves of their ornaments. They toiled, &c. Gave their best and richest. And what was the result? Look next chapter, ver. 5, 6. I imagine four classes might not be in time. The covetous, the vain, the supine, and the procrastinating. I ask, ought not our attachment to the cause of Christ to be equal to theirs for the tabernacle of Moses? and let this,

III. Be the lesson our subject teaches.

(1.) They were a highly favored people, the separated people of the Lord,—the peculiar nation. But, beloved, what is your calling and designation? Chosen,—elect,—precious. The jewels of the Lord,—saints of the Most High.

(2.) They had richly participated of the divine mercy. Redeemed from Egyptian bondage,—led through the Red sea.—Dividing, guiding, preserving, &c. But what is your experience? God hath redeemed you not merely by might, &c. But with the precious blood, &c. What hath he not done for you? &c.

(3.) For them he raised up Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua; but his own Son hath he sent into the world for you, &c.

(4.) To them he promised a Canaan,—a land of rest. But for you a celestial inheritance, &c. Nay, your privileges are vastly greater and more precious. They had but the dawn,—the types and shadows; but you have the day, and the anti-type, and the substitute. They had the law, and Moses, and ceremonies; but you have the gospel, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, &c. I ask, how many feel as they did, and give the same manifestation of it? Alas! some care for none of these things. Alas! some are merely formal. Alas! some are covetous, and give grudgingly. Alas! some act as if God were greatly indebted to them. How is it with you? Give yourselves first, and then the best you have to the Lord's service. Spiritual prosperity must be secured by acting as the Jews did.

THE NATURE AND ADVANTAGE OF GOD'S SERVICE.

"Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?"—MALACHI iii. 14.

IT is clear that a very extensive declension had taken place in the professed church of God during the days of Malachi. Our text refers to the state of mind and the conversation of those who were evidently strangers to the root of the matter, and the power of saving piety. Our subject leads us naturally to consider,

I. THE COURSE OF PRACTICAL PIETY.
II. ITS ADVANTAGES, and
III. THOSE TO WHOM IT IS EVIDENTLY UNEDIFYING AND PROFITLESS.

I. THE COURSE OF PRACTICAL PIETY. Real practical piety is the fruit of internal religion, the flowing stream from the fountain of the grace of God in the soul. A right state of heart will produce a right conversation and course of life. Our text gives us a three-fold view of practical piety.

1. *It is to serve God.* Not Satan, or self, or the world. Service of God often includes the whole of religion. It embraces a knowledge of God's will, a love to God's laws, a sincere desire to please God, and earnest effort to conform to his revealed mind. It is to recognise God's right over us, God's claim upon us, and a consecration of ourselves to his glory.

2. *To keep his ordinances.* His appointed institutions. He has always had these. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Afterwards sacrifices—solemn fasts and feasts—the rites of the tabernacle and temple. These Jesus honored, and at one of these he began his ministry. He went into the synagogue, &c. Christianity has its ordinances; but they are *few, plain,* and *spiritual;* but they are also important; blessings to the spiritually minded; first Christians were earnest. They continued steadfast, &c. Forsaking not the assembling of themselves, &c. In a right state of mind we must love and delight in them. Christ demands it—our profession, our comfort, our safety, &c.

3. *To walk mournfully before the Lord.* Now let it not be presumed that religion is essentially melancholy. We are called to joy and gladness. Let the children of Zion, &c. Rejoice in the Lord, &c. Yet there is a sorrow and mournfulness which is eminently religious.

A contemplation of our own defects, failings, sins, &c.

A contemplation of the condition of many of our friends, &c.

A contemplation of the awful state of thousands around us.

Let us see some examples. "I was grieved because of the transgressors." Absalom caused David many tears, "O Absalom, my son," &c. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. But it is a hallowed *sorrow,* no weakening but invigorating. Sorrow possessing the seeds of joy within it. Sorrow that makes the heart better. Now let us look,

II. AT THE ADVANTAGES OF PRACTICAL PIETY. Now these are numerous—present, temporal, spiritual, and everlasting, but,

1. *It is morally elevating and dignifying.* That which makes man more worthy of the powers he possesses and the station he occupies. It is the honor of man to serve God. It lifts him higher in the scale of being, allies him nearer to angels, to seraphim, &c. It expands the mind, cultivates the intellectual faculties, and betters the heart. "Praise the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength, ye ministers of his, who do *his pleasure.*" The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor.

2. *It is pre-eminently peaceful in its influences.* In keeping God's commandments there is great reward. "Great peace have they who love thy law," &c.—The peace of the pacified conscience,—the peace of God in the soul. "Peace I give unto you," &c.

3. *It is supremely glorious in its results.* It will ensure a personal interest in all the promises. A sufficient supply of Christian graces. A joyous hope of blissful immortality and eternal joy. "Be thou faithful unto death," &c. "Then he will say to the faithful servant—"Well done, good and faithful servant," &c. Then let us consider,

III. THOSE TO WHOM IT IS UNEDIFYING AND PROFITLESS. The formal Jews thus spake, and doubtless they spake the truth. Now practical piety will be so,

1. *To those who are not adapted to its duties.* Thousands are not adapted to the pursuits of literature or science, &c. So to religion. To serve God we must be renewed in our hearts. Translated out of the

kingdom of darkness. If our hearts dislike God, how can we serve him, or be happy in religious duties? Now this many attempt, and of course they fail, and then they utter the truth of the text, and say, "It is vain," &c. It is so to those,

2. *Who mistake the service God requires.* God does not design we should yield meritorious service—service to deserve his favor, to obtain pardon for sin, and a legal right to glory. Self-righteousness only produces slavery, and binds its vassals in galling chains. Those who place their services in the stead of Christ's merits may well say, "It is vain," &c. And it is so, and so it must be,

3. *To those who try to unite the service of the world and of God.* To be gay in the world, and devout at church. To dance in the assembly of the wicked, and pray in the house of the Lord. To be worldly all the week, and devout on the Sabbath, or to divide the Sabbath between amusements and religion. Such persons will ever feel as the ancient Jews did.

4. *Those who serve God with negligence and inconsistency.* The diligent hand maketh rich. Indolence and barrenness, leanness and dissatisfaction. How often this weakness, languor, and death! How sinful and foolish to blame religion! It is want of it, the neglect of it, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Ascertain the true scriptural features of true practical piety.* It must begin by faith in Christ, by which guilt is forgiven, and the soul converted to God; and it must be matured by the grace of God, and redound to his glory.

2. *Urge all to engage in it.* Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

SERVICE FOR GOD REWARDED.

"I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God."—EZEKIEL xxix. 20.

THE way of the Lord is often in the sea; and his footsteps in the mighty deep. To short-sighted mortals often uttterly past finding out. It would indeed be marvellous if creatures of a day, finite beings, could comprehend the infinite and infallible movements of the Ruler of the universe. God has all resources at command. When he designs the punishment of his enemies he can employ famine, or pestilence, or earthquake, or the devouring sword. Tyre had maliciously exulted in the overthrow and misery of the Jews. God therefore employs Nebuchadnezzar to punish their impiety and heartlessness. Having besieged for thirteen years, he found only a heap of desolated walls. The inhabitants had removed their wealth, and of course Nebuchadnezzar was disappointed; God therefore says to Ezekiel, verse 18, "Son of man," &c. What is the fair deduction to be derived? That work for God shall not pass unrewarded. If to enemies, how much more to friends! We observe,

I. THAT IN CARRYING OUT HIS DESIGNS ON EARTH GOD GENERALLY EMPLOYS HUMAN AGENCY. Occasionally there has been miraculous interposition. Deluge; Babel; plagues of Egypt; angels also, both as instruments of terror and mercy. These are the exceptions; but let us look at the pacific designs of God. His places of benevolence, &c. He emancipated Israel by Moses and Aaron, &c. Employed Joshua, and Caleb, and others, &c. In erecting the tabernacle the nation was employed, all were invited to help; so also the people united with Solomon in erecting the temple; thus too Nehemiah in the erection of the second temple; so also in the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. He chose men to be his heralds, and afterwards the churches were to diffuse the light, &c. of the gospel. In all ages it has been so; in the Reformation he did thus; in the revival of religion; in Britain at the present period; missions, schools, tracts, temperance, philanthropy, &c. God worketh by his servants.

II. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE SHOULD HAVE CORRECT VIEWS OF THE WORK DEVOLVING UPON US. I assume,

1. *That the whole church is to be an active working church.* Christ says to every converted person, "Go work to-day," &c. If so, then there is work suitable to each, also in each talents suited to the work. The details of duties are various and abundant. Paul often speaks of the active useful women; see Romans xvi. 1 and 6; Philippians iv. 3.

2. *That we labor to know the will of God as to the department of our labor.* "What wouldest thou have me," &c. Go, preach,

&c. Go, entreat sinners to hear, &c. Go, encourage the attentive hearer; go, speak to the careless benighted family; go, teach the young, &c. Go, visit the sick, &c. But I am old and infirm; go, exhibit the fruits of experience, retire often and pray. Hold up their hands who are toiling. Go, give thy wealth; go, use thy influence, &c.

3. *That we should enter upon work in his fear, and in the strength of his grace.* Many commence from novelty—many with confidence—many from self-righteous views—many because others do—no principle in all this. Fruit will not be good; to be solemnly impressed as to the duty—to be fearful of ourselves—to depend upon God, &c.

4. *That in working for God, we should be constant, persevering, and humble.* Constant—not by fits and starts of impulse, &c. Persevering; in good and evil report; not be weary, &c. Humble; it is our duty—it is our honor. It unites to angels—all our ability God, &c. "Not unto us," &c. "Not I, but the grace of God," &c. We observe,

III. That work done thus for God, shall not go unrecompensed. Now, we must conclude thus,

1. *From the justice of God.* "God is not unrighteous," &c. But especially from,

2. *His goodness.* He is the best of masters, &c.

3. *From his promises.* Every act of self-denial, every gift of a cup of water, &c. He will reward every man, &c. "For your labor shall not be in vain," &c. But what recompense?

1. *Present.* Approbation of God. His favor and smile. Our own conscience too. A sense of satisfaction, that we are moving in the sphere of providence, &c. Not living altogether in vain. Besides, the direct effect will be our prosperity; it will improve, exalt, heighten our enjoyments. God will particularly bless, &c. "More shall be given," &c. Spiritual health, &c. The prayers and the blessing of other persons. They will admire, esteem, supplicate, &c. Especially those to whom we have been useful; but the recompense,

2. *Will also be future.* God will reward with honoring, satisfying, and blessing, in proportion to our exertions and usefulness. The parable of the talents; so also Christ's disciples at the last day. "I was an hungered," &c. They that be wise, &c. The recompense will be eternal.

APPLICATION.

1. *Who are working for the Lord?* Maintain purity of motives, simplicity, perseverance, &c.

2. *Who will now consecrate their services?* Noble employment; present happiness, and future reward.

3. *How wretched the servitude of sin!* "The wages of sin," &c. Oh, renounce that service, and master, and avert the doom.

LARGENESS OF HEART.

"Largeness of heart."—1 Kings iv. 29.

Scripture biography is both instructive and useful. There the lives of men are written by the infallible Spirit of God. The portraits are all true, and real—nothing fictitious—nothing colored by the partiality of friendship—nothing penned under the spirit of prejudice—we see men as God saw and decided as to their principles and character. The diversity of scripture biography is one of its chief recommendations. Men of all grades of intellectual distinction and moral worth, of all stations in life, and of all offices in the church, and in the world. The design of Christian biography is to incite our emulation of the holy, wise, and good, and to warn us against the spirit, conduct, and doom of transgressors. Of those who flourished under the old dispensation, Solomon held a distinguished place. The chapter out of which the text is selected, is describing his worldly magnificence and glory. But how really poor and evanescent all this—his own inscription is "Vanity," &c. But the text contains a higher testimonial, and to one part of this our attention is directed. Let us ascertain,

I. In what largeness of heart consists.

II. The means of its attainment. And,

III. The importance of its possession.

I. In what largeness of heart consists. By the heart we mean the whole soul, including the mental and moral powers. A large heart is,

1. *Evangelically intellectual in its attainments.* This is in fact the very atmosphere of its health and existence. Its powers are

all invigorated, and rendered powerful by the acquisition of knowledge. If this is extensively true of knowledge in general, how much more of that which includes the true knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ! So valuable was this in the estimation of the great apostle that he made this noble avowal, "Yea, doubtless," &c. "This is life eternal, to know," &c. They that know their God shall be strong and do exploits. This is synonymous with wisdom, which is the principal thing—the adorning of the mind, and the very life of the soul. A large heart will be,

2. *Candid and ingenuous in its conclusions.* A bigoted or prejudiced mind is necessarily stunted and dwarfish. Such a state of mind only observes what passes in the limited range of its own sphere—it only judges of its own things—afraid to look abroad—short-sighted—afraid of excellency where it cannot sanction it. Now, all this is petty, and puerile, and quite opposed to a large heart—a large heart rejoices in excellency anywhere and everywhere—a large heart judges of things in proportion to their true importance—it hopeth all things, believeth all things—it proves all things, and holds fast that which is good—it is not blinded by fond partialities, or fettered by senseless prejudices. This is one true sign of largeness of heart. See it in Moses, when envied by the people, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets!" See it in the Saviour, "Lord, we saw some casting out devils, and we forbade them,"—"Forbid them not, they that are not against us are with us."

3. *A large heart will be noble and enterprising in its aims.* Now, Solomon transacted all on a mighty and princely scale. Think of the temple; so also Moses in his office of deliverer of the Jews—so also Nehemiah in rearing again the walls of Jerusalem—so the apostles in attempting the conversion of the world by the preaching of the cross. A little heart only ventures on small matters—a great heart ventures much—aims at much—risks much—expends much energy and resolution. Thus Gideon with three hundred men attacks the countless hosts of the Midianites—thus David challenges the gigantic Goliath—thus Luther dared to attack Rome in her strong holds—thus our forefathers ventured their all for conscience' sake—thus our missionaries dare hazard their lives for the gospel's sake. Who will say that Carey, and Elliot, and Brainerd, and Schwartz, and Williams, and Moffat, were not men of large heart? A large heart,

4. *Is generous and liberal in its affections.* Avarice acts like the rust—like the blight—like the pestilence. It affects the features of the face—it affects the gait—it affects the speech. And in all cases it withers and petrifies. Look at the opposite class of feelings. The generous and liberal soul is fat, fair, and comely to look at. The eye bright, and the countenance and the expression benignant, the hand open and expanded; its gait firm and impressive; it deviseth liberal things. A worldly, avaricious, sordid heart must necessarily be contracted. Benevolence is the true characteristic of a large heart. Notice,

II. How it is to be attained.

1. *It must breathe a pure air.* The sons of the mountain are esteemed strong and hale. Enlargedness of heart is only attainable by fervent prayer. The soul must often breathe where cherubim and seraphim burn. There must be fellowship with God, communion with the skies. Thus Moses was so great—thus Jacob—thus Elijah. And Jesus has shown us the value and essentiality of this.

2. *It must have nutritious diet.* "Thy words were food," &c. The pure unadulterated word of God. The Bereans—Apollos, mighty in the scripture—Daniel's greatness, "In thy laws," &c. See the spirit of the 119th Psalm. To be great spiritually we must come to this banquet, to these streams, &c.

3. *It must have wholesome discipline.* Moral restraint—self-denial essential—cross-bearing—self-despising. The Christian must be a moral wrestler—a spiritual racer; self-control. "I die daily," &c. This forms the heroic character; thus was Moses disciplined in the wilderness; David, the prophets, the Jews, the apostles, &c. Greatness of heart is not to be obtained on beds of down, in rosy paths, in the calm retirement, on the smooth lake; but in the desert, on the mountain-top, mid the billows' roar, &c.

4. *It must have heavenly influences.* The sunshine, and the rain, the early dews, &c. God makes great by the communications of his Holy Spirit. He gives strength, and might, and power—he enables us to war—

he renders all mighty and effectual. God has engaged to set his people on high, and to make their hands and their arms strong. To give power to the feeble, &c. Thus and thus only can we have largeness of heart. Observe,

III. The importance of its possession.

1. *In largeness of heart there is true excellency.* Not in talents merely—not in titles—not in wealth. Man may have all these, and be petty, little, and mean. But greatness of heart is the true dignity and glory of man. This is human nature in its best and most exalted state. This God beholds and loves, &c.

2. *There is the capacity for much enjoyment.* Capacity for elevated enjoyment must depend on the expansion of mind. Savage and philosopher, child and man. Now greatness of heart enables the soul to receive more, hold more, retain more. A regard to our own interests, to our enjoyments, ought to excite us to labor after largeness of heart.

3. *There are greater capabilities of usefulness.* No mighty movement was ever effected without this. There must be some one having largeness of heart. If not, the plan will fail. The arrangement will be insufficient; largeness of heart gives the power of extensive influence. This is true weight of character. Such men are captains in the cause of Christ—the church of God. The institutions of humanity and religion depend much on men large in heart. They are the pillars of society; they move the masses around them. We should all seek after this. We have many instances in our own history—Wesley, Whitfield, Clarkson, Wilberforce, and Chalmers at present in the church of Scotland.

4. *These are more closely conformed to the image of God.* Vastness or immensity is the idea inseparably connected with Deity. Whether wisdom, power, or mercy. In goodness, God is infinite. Oh, how large, how immense the heart of God! The myriads it embraces—the love that fills it—the beneficence that flows from it—the sun and sea the symbols of it.

APPLICATION.

1. *How the subject condemns many of us.* How contracted, frigid, selfish, useless we are!

2. *The church of Christ presents an enlarged sphere for employment.*

3. *May it excite all to seek after spiritua greatness, true largeness of heart.*

A REMEMBRANCE OF FORMER INIQUITIES DEPRECATED

"Oh, remember not against us former iniquities, let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low."—Psalm lxxix. 8.

Our text contains a prayer suited to the pious under all circumstances and occasions. We cannot possibly feel our unworthiness too deeply, or lament our sins too mournfully before the Lord. Let us then apply the text to our own souls, and in the spirit of sincere earnestness cry unto the Lord, "Oh remember," &c. Observe,

I. A painful retrospect. "Former iniquities." Two classes. Those which,

1. *Were committed before conversion.* These God mercifully blotted out in the day when we came in penitential faith to his footstool. Yet it is well to remember their greatness and number, and hence how rich the mercy that forgave them. Thus Paul.

2. *Those iniquities which have been committed since our acceptance of God.* "For there is not a just man," &c. "In many things we all," &c. Some of these have been sins of infirmity. Some sins of surprise, by the extreme power of temptation. But many have been iniquities of deliberation. All of them full of evil. We ought not to forget them. Should abase us,—keep us contrite,—excite holy abhorrence, &c. "O wretched man," &c.

II. A present sense of depression. "Brought very low."

1. *Sometimes into a low state of enjoyment.* No relish for spiritual things, &c. No peace or joy, &c. Or,

2. *A low state of despondency.* Hope almost extinct,—soul cast down within us. Doubts and fears prevailing. "I shall one day perish," &c. Faint and dismayed.

3. *A low state of affliction.* Bodily weakness, increase of infirmities, &c. Wearisome days and restless nights, &c.

III. A prayer suited to the disease.

1. *Punishment deprecated.* "Oh, remember not," &c. "If thou shouldest mark iniquity," &c.

2. *The tender mercies of the Lord entreated.* "Tender mercies,"—and nothing so suited to us as this, "He delighteth,"

&c. He has said, "I will have mercy on you," &c. "In the midst of wrath," &c.

3. *Immediate help implored.* "Speedily." The present is always God's time, and should it not be ours? "Prevent us." That is, prevent our ruin, or help us despite of our great unworthiness.

APPLICATION.

1. Let a remembrance of past sins excite to watchfulness.
2. God's mercy,—to gratitude and confidence.
3. The penitent may come now and obtain mercy.

GOD'S BLESSING IRREVERSIBLE.

"Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it."—NUMBERS xxiii. 20.

THE text is connected with three illustrious orders of persons. The first of these is Balak, king of Moab; Balaam, the wicked prophet; and the Israelites, who were journeying to the land of promise. Balak hated the Israelites, and was anxious to bring evil, &c. Balaam hires himself to curse them; but God frustrated his design, and out of the lips hired to curse, God produced a blessing. Here is the wicked prophet's confession, "He hath blessed," &c.

I. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE BLESSED OF HIM.
II. HIS BLESSING CANNOT BE REVERSED.

I. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE BLESSED OF HIM. So it was with Israel of old. God blessed them by wonderful deliverances, and countless tokens of his favor. His compassionate eye was over them in Egypt; his arm led them out; his bounty supplied their wants; his presence guided—shielded them, &c. God has now his Israel in the world: all the spiritual seed of Abraham; all those who have believed in the Messiah; all who are travelling to a better country. On these his blessing rests. He hath blessed,

(1.) With pardoning mercy.
(2.) With delivering grace.
(3.) With spiritual supplies.
(4.) With all needful good. Now this applies to every age of the world—to every true Israelite.

II. HIS BLESSING CANNOT BE REVERSED.

1. *Wicked men would, but cannot.*
2. *Satan would, but cannot.*
3. *God does not desire to do so, and therefore will not.* We may reject the blessing—backslide from God; but his gifts, &c., are without repentance.

APPLICATION.

1. Are we his people?
2. Then we have his blessing.
3. And this is all-sufficient.

THE CLAIMS OF GOD AND MAN.

"Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."—MATTHEW xxii. 21.

OUR text is connected with a snare which was laid for the Saviour, and by which his enemies proposed to bring him into collision, either with the Roman power, or into contempt with his own nation, the Jews. Christ displayed his consummate wisdom on the occasion by the course which he adopted. Read the context. He not only, however, delivered himself from the artifice of his foes, but he has left his own example and laws for the guidance of his church to the end of the world. Civil governors have claims, and Christians must cheerfully yield them their due. God has claims, and his demands are most sacred and momentous. Let us then consider,

I. THE CLAIMS OF CIVIL GOVERNMENTS, and
II. THE CLAIMS OF GOD.

I. NOTICE THE CLAIMS OF CÆSAR, OR CIVIL GOVERNMENTS. Now the just claims of civil governments are limited to civil exactions, in opposition to religious or sacred claims. Civil governments rightly demand,

1. *Homage and subjection.* Rom. xiii. 1, &c.; 1 Pet. ii. 13, &c.

2. *Obedience, and tribute or taxes.* Christ did this, Matt. xvii. 27; see also Titus iii. 1.

3. *Thanksgiving and prayer to God on their behalf.* 1 Tim. ii. 1, &c. Now these are the claims of Cæsar and civil governments. But civil governments may demand more than their rights; if they do so, they will be either in matters civil or ecclesiastical; if they levy unjust civil exactions, then as citizens they may be peacefully, yet firmly resisted. Interference

in matters of conscience must also be resisted in our character as Christians. This has been repeatedly done. By the three Hebrews, Daniel, Peter, and the apostles, Acts iv. 18. If governments pass the line, and legislate for the conscience, then they intrude on the solemn claims of Deity. Let us then consider,

II. The claims of God. Now these are higher and more momentous in their character; all things pertaining to conscience and religion are God's.

1. *We are to render to God religious belief and homage.* He alone must be enthroned as God, worshipped, &c., have religious veneration, &c. No man, nor saint, nor angel.

2. *To God must be rendered religious awe and fear.* "Fear before him, all the earth." We are to stand in awe—we are to give him reverence and godly fear. "O fear the Lord, all ye his saints," Psalm xcvi. 4, 9.

3. *To God must be rendered praise and thanksgiving.* We are to bless God, to praise him from day to day, to show forth, &c. He is worthy, &c. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," &c.

4. *To God must be rendered our highest love and delight.* Hence that great commandment, "Delight thyself in the Lord," &c. He is to dwell on the throne of our affections, &c. We are to joy in God, giving him in all things the pre-eminence.

5. *To God must be rendered universal obedience.* Now the laws of God must be read and known, understood and practised. Laws of God of two kinds—moral, such as are essential in the fitness of things—resemble his holy nature. Ceremonial or positive—such as the tree in Paradise, command to Lot, &c., Levitical rites, &c. Under the New Testament two of these stand out. Baptism an ordinance appointed by Christ, resting entirely on his authority. The Lord's supper precisely based on the same kind of authority. Both these are to be held sacred and obligatory on all who love him. Now supposing any king or government, or ecclesiastical body, prohibit any of these, and demand obedience to their edicts instead of God's, our text allows of no compromise, you are not to consult your ease or profit, God's claims must be yielded to him only. Our subject places civil and religious matters in their true light, and in heir due responsibility. Learn,

1. That the Christian religion is favorable to order and obedience, but it limits the authority of the state to civil concerns And,

2. It distinctly exhibits true liberty of conscience. Should not this be dear and sacred to every good man, especially when sanctioned by the spirit of our text.

THE LORD'S NAME PLEADED.

"But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me."—Psalm cix. 21.

This is one of the prayers of the devout and holy psalmist. He is describing the sufferings and persecutions he was called to bear from wicked men, and he then breaks forth in the language of the text, "But do thou for me," &c.

I. The good man is not sufficient for his own safety and welfare.

(1.) His enemies are numerous and powerful.

(2.) He is sojourning in a world unfavorable to piety.

(3.) He has to do with a nature unfriendly to holiness.

II. God is every way sufficient for the safety and happiness of his saints. He can ward off every evil weapon; he can keep from every evil in the world; he can carry on the good work of grace within us.

III. Believers should by faith and prayer place all their affairs in his hands.

1. *In trying providences.* We should use the language of the text, "Lord, do thou for me." Give me light; incline my feet to the right path; overrule all for my good.

2. *In deep trouble and affliction.* We are often compelled to be passive—to be silent observers; to resign all into his hands. Then is the time for God to do for us. He ever works. He can deliver out of trouble—support in it—or make it a great blessing.

3. *How appropriate the prayer of the text to the dying hour!* It has been said, dying is hard work. It is very solemn work. The body sinking—earth receding—eternity appearing. How delightful to feel the language of the text, and to breathe it in our dying prayers!

IV. GOD'S NAME IS THE BEST PLEA BY WHICH WE CAN URGE OUR SUIT.

(1.) Name often signifies nature. For thy nature's sake. Goodness—love—faithfulness.

(2.) His word bears his name, and is full of promises.

(3.) Jesus, especially bears his name.

APPLICATION.

1. Guard against self-direction, and all self-trust.

2. Commit all to God.

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE THESSALONIANS.

"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."—2 THESSALONIANS iii. 5.

OUR text contains a very striking exhibition of the doctrine of the Trinity, and also a peculiar instance of prayer being addressed to the Holy Spirit. The Lord—the Spirit—direct your hearts into the love of the Father, and into the patient waiting for Christ. Important as was this prayer to the Thessalonians, equally so is it to us. It is essential to our best interests, that our hearts should be thus directed, &c. Observe,

I. THE BLESSINGS SOUGHT.
II. THE BEING ADDRESSED. And,
III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRAYER.

I. THE BLESSINGS SOUGHT.

1. *The establishment of the heart in the love of God.* They were not strangers to this emotion, but their increase and establishment in it was desirable. The love of God is the supreme esteem and affection of the soul towards him. It is ever associated with holy fear and veneration; it is always connected with grateful emotions; and is attended by delight in God. When this love exists, the love of self cannot be dominant—nor the love of the world—nor the love of sin. This love is a pure flame, consuming the dross of earthliness. It will also identify the soul with the things of God; with his word—his ordinances—his people—his glory, &c. Now, the heart may be directed more deeply into this love—more intently into it—more delightfully into it—more influentially into it. Meditate more—read more—pray more—praise more, &c.

2. *The patient waiting for Christ.* Now the Christian expects the second advent of Christ. It is the object of his hopes—it will be the consummation of his desires; but trials, sorrows, and toil intervene. Hence the necessity of patience—"I will wait all the days of my appointed time," &c. Now, this patient waiting implies prayerful waiting; diligent waiting, "Giving all diligence," &c.; resigned waiting, as the apostle, "I have a desire," &c. "Yet to live is Christ," &c. His ways are best, &c. Labor till he calls to rest, &c. "Be faithful unto death," &c. Observe,

II. THE BEING ADDRESSED. The Lord—the Holy Spirit. Now observe,

1. *He has revealed to us the love of God.* Holy men wrote as they were moved, &c. But for this, we should have been in the direst darkness, &c. Now, who so fit as the Revealer to direct, &c.

2. *He has wrought in us the love of God* —Romans v. 5. "He takes of the things of Christ," &c. He convinces—converts—renews, &c. He kindles the flame, &c. Now, how proper that the same blessed Being who began the good work, should also cary it on in the soul!

3. *All gracious influences are produced by the Spirit of God.* Every holy feeling and desire is wrought by him. He incites, quickens, invigorates, sanctifies. We are sustained—preserved by him. To him must we entirely look for the heart being directed, &c. Patience is also one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. In trouble he cheers. Observe,

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRAYER.

1. *The dangers to which we are exposed* Heart liable to get cold; worldly influences, &c.; carnal influences; Satan tempts, &c.; love may wax cold; the Laodiceans lost their first love, &c. Now, the things of sight, &c., are fraught with peril, &c. How necessary, then, the prayer!

2. *The value of the blessing supposed* "Love of God," &c. Now, this is the essence of religion—the root—the basis, &c If this fails, nothing will be left worth possessing; nothing but leaves, or dry branches, &c. All graces and virtues depend on this. The life of God in the soul.

3. *The enjoyment connected with its pos*

session. This is the highest degree of felicity, to love the best, &c., of beings, and have it reflected, reciprocated, returned with overflowing measure. This is bliss; heaven on earth, &c. Notice,

4. *The many promises made to those who love God*—John xiv. 21. Indeed, all the gospel promises are connected with this. Just think of one declaration, "All things work together," &c. How desirable—how necessary—how essential to pray, "The Lord," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Have you the love of God?* &c. Oh! retain, increase, grow, keep yourselves in the love of God, &c.

2. *Are you waiting for Christ?* Expecting his second advent, &c. Keep the eye of faith and hope steadfast; endure patiently; pray in the language of the text.

3. *Direct the mind of all unrenewed persons to these two important principles.*

SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS.

"Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"—John xiv. 22.

Christ is here discoursing as to his departure, and addressing words of peace and comfort to his disciples. The whole chapter abounds with rich consolations. How tenderly, how affectingly he introduces the subject, "Let not your heart be troubled," &c. How full and complete his promise, verse 3, "If I go away," &c. He assures them of the Spirit's comforting presence, verse 16. He then urges continued and uniform obedience, verse 21. On this Judas, or Jude, the same who wrote the epistle, asks, "Lord, how is it," &c. Notice,

I. The nature of Christ's manifestation.

II. Some striking instances of Christ's manifestation. And,

III. The righteous influences of Christ's manifestation.

I. The nature of Christ's manifestation. To manifest is to show forth; to give a display of himself. Now, Christ has manifested himself,

1. *In the gospel.* Here we behold his glory; here his nature—perfections—works—and offices are all revealed. The scriptures testify of Christ. Here he is manifested to mankind. The gospel is thus called the gospel of Christ—word of Christ, &c. The gospel is the field in which the peerless pearl of great price is to be found.

2. *In the soul.* And this is the special spiritual manifestation of Christ. It is the office of the Spirit to "take of the things of Christ," John xvi. 15. Now, there are many seasons in which Christ is manifested to the soul.

(1.) The day of conversion. Soul has been illuminated—converted—brought to Christ. At last venturing on him by faith, Christ speaks. "Thy sins which are many," &c. "Go in peace," &c. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt," &c.

(2.) The day of trouble; perhaps of bereavement—of losses, &c.—or bodily affliction, &c. How often has he appeared as to his beloved friends of Bethany, "Thy brother shall rise," &c. Or to Mary, who was sorrowing at the sepulchre, "Why weepest thou," &c.

(3.) In times of imminent peril. Thus Peter, when he was walking on the waves; Paul, when the vessel was in danger. He is better than all their fears, "A very present help," &c. "At my first answer no man stood by me," &c. "Yet the Lord stood," &c.

(4.) In the means of grace. Now, this is especially promised, "Wherever two or three are met together," &c. The Old Testament promises, "Wherever my name is recorded," &c. Hence he engages to beautify the place of his feet, &c.—"To glorify the house of his glory." How often have we seen and felt his presence—"Lord, it is good to be here," &c. "One thing have I," &c.

(5.) In the crisis of death—"Yea, though I walk through the valley," &c. In the day of glory—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God," &c. Looking for that blessed hope, &c. "I will receive you to myself." "Then we shall see his face." We pass on to notice,

II. Some striking instances of Christ's manifestation. There was,

1. *All the divine appearances in the patriarchal and Levitical dispensation.* To Abraham—Jacob—Moses—Joshua—Isaiah—Ezekiel.

2. *The extraordinary manifestation of Christ after his incarnation.* When transfigured on the Mount; after his resurrection; to Saul of Tarsus; to John in Patmos.

3. *The last manifestation will be at his second advent.* When he comes in his own glory, and the glory of his holy angels. When every eye shall see him, &c.

III. THE RIGHTEOUS INFLUENCE OF CHRIST'S MANIFESTATION. A manifestation of Christ to the soul should produce,

1. *Love to Christ.* A contemplation of Christ should charm and captivate the soul. Thus prophets of old, &c. "My heart is inditing," &c. "He is the fairest," &c.

2. *Gratitude to Christ.* His manifestations are condescending—gracious—beneficent. What should be the return? "I will praise thee with joyful lips," &c. Every emotion ought to be awakened. "Heart overflowing," &c.

3. *Desires after Christ.* If we know Christ at all, we shall desire to know more. So, if we enjoy Christ, &c. The soul delighting in Christ never can say it is enough. As the poet sang—

> "If all the world my Saviour knew,
> Then all the world would love him too."

4. *Likeness to Christ.* It has been said that intimacy will produce resemblance. This is especially the case in spiritual things. Close connection with Christ will produce Christ's likeness. The manifestation of the gentle Saviour will produce gentleness; of the lowly Saviour—humility; of the loving Saviour—affection; of the holy Saviour—purity; of the devotional Saviour—a spirit of sanctity; of the zealous Saviour—a spirit of devotedness to his cause. Such are the influences of Christ's manifestation.

APPLICATION.

1. *Our subject is one of experience to the Christian.* You have realized the text. Christ has manifested himself, &c.

2. *Remember this is your great privilege.* "Not unto the world." We must come out of the world. He shines in his own sphere; in the midst of his own family; in his own temple, &c.

3. *There are manifestations of wrath as well as mercy.* He will display his vengeance to his enemies, &c. "Oh! kiss the Son, lest he be angry," &c.

IMPORTANT ADMONITIONS.

"Therefore turn then to thy God, keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually."—HOSEA xii. 6.

THE text is an exhortation to Ephraim, Judah, and Jacob. But it is of equal importance to us. Worthy of our consideration, and adapted to our improvement and comfort. Religion is not so much a series of disjointed acts, as a gracious spiritual habit of mind, from which will arise affectionate regard, and sincere obedience to the divine commands. Notice,

I. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN AND JEHOVAH. "Thy God." He is the God of all creatures—the creator and universal ruler of all things. But he is only specifically so to those who know, and love, and serve him. As the God of his people,

1. *He is the object of their reverential awe and fear.* God is greatly to be feared, &c. "Oh fear the Lord, all ye his saints." Let us have grace, &c. As their God,

2. *He is the object of their confidence and trust.* They trust in the Lord with all their hearts; commit all to him, and into his hands. They view him as God all-sufficient. They trust in him at all times.

3. *He is the object of their delight and hope.* "Delight thyself in the Lord." They delight in all that relates to God; they delight in his name, word, covenant, ordinances, people, &c. All their hopes too have respect to God. Hope then in him; for all mercies, and blessings, &c. They hope in the Lord their God—they hope in him for perfect salvation and eternal glory. God is only thus the God of those who are in a state of reconciliation with him through Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ enables us to approach Jehovah as our God.

> "My God is reconciled,
> His pardoning voice I hear;
> He owns me for his child;
> I can no longer fear;
> But now with confidence draw nigh,
> And Father, Abba, Father, cry."

II. THE DUTY. To wait upon God. Now we do this in reading his word. In secret meditation—in prayer, &c. &c. But we do this also when we seek to set the Lord always before us. When our hearts are kept in a pious, watchful state. When a devotional and contemplative state of heart is cherished. Now this waiting is to be

continual; as far as possible incessant. It should be so,

1. *Because we have continual wants which must be supplied.* We are in need continually; we need light, and peace, and holiness continually.

2. *We are exposed to evil continually.* Hence we require guiding, and keeping, and delivering always.

3. *We have continual duties to perform.* For these we need strength, both of disposition and execution. To love and to practise the Lord's commandments.

4. *God is continually able and ready to bless us.* All times and places are alike with him. Wherever, or whatever the condition, he can and will bless us.

APPLICATION.

1. Avoid neglect of communion with God.

2. Pray that in this you may delight.

THE PROGRESSIVE GLORY OF THE CHURCH.

"Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."—SOLOMON'S SONG, vi. 10.

BOTH Jewish and Christian commentators have, almost by universal consent, considered this Song of Solomon to have respect to the Messiah and his church. It will be seen that the whole has the appearance of a highly-wrought drama, in which oriental imagery of the richest kind is constantly brought before us. The text is considered to be a vivid description of the admiration of the Messiah for the bride—his church; and as such we shall consider it on this occasion. Many, very many are the figures by which the church is described. It is likened to a flock—to a family—to a vineyard. Our text compares it to the dawn of the morning—the fairness of the moon—the brightness of the sun—and magnificent as an army with banners. We shall consider this description as representing the church under her various dispensations.

I. THE CHURCH, IN ANTEDILUVIAN AND PATRIARCHAL TIMES, LOOKED FORTH AS THE MORNING. Sin and the fall introduced darkness—the darkness of rebellion, ignorance, crime, and wo. The dark cloud of the displeasure of Jehovah would have rested on our world, had not the purposes of mercy and the designs of love surrounded it. How melancholy the loss of paradise—the expulsion from Eden—the lowering curse—the departure of angels, &c. But just when the darkness became thickest, and the peril most imminent, God revealed the purpose of his grace, providing a Saviour in the person of the woman's seed. This was the break of redemption's day to our world. Believers—thus from Abel to Enoch, and from Noah to Abraham, and from Abraham to Moses—enjoyed this dawn. It was their solace, and hope, and joy. Like the opening morning, there was serenity and peace, and the prospect of a coming day. Of Abraham, it is said, he desired to see the day of Christ; and, elevated on the wings of a soaring faith, he saw it, and was glad.

II. THE CHURCH, UNDER THE LEVITICAL DISPENSATION, WAS FAIR AS THE MOON. The light was of a different kind; not so much advancement towards day, as the soft and fair reflected beams of the moon.

1. *The changes of the church's condition seem indicated by this metaphor.* Now in Egypt, oppressed—groaning, &c.; then free, on her way to the land of rest. Now passing through the channels of the Red Sea, and then crossing the arid desert. Now marching under the guide of the mystic pillar, and then conflicting with her numerous adversaries. Now enjoying of mercy, and then punished by the Almighty for their unbelief, &c. A scene of incessant change. Look at its checkered character in the times of the rulers; in the days of Samuel, and David, and the prophets.

2. *But it also seems to refer to the variety of her ordinances.* How numerous and dissimilar! Her feasts and fasts; her sacrifices and offerings; her ordinances and services; her oblations and gifts. How extensive her ritual—one revolving series of ceremonies; yet how superior her state to the nations around! There, was dense darkness, or here and there merely suspended a flickering lamp of idolatrous superstition. But,

III. THE CHURCH, IN THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION, IS CLEAR AS THE SUN. The moon has gone down—the dawn is superseded—the darkness has passed away. Now the people who sat in darkness, &c. The long-expected era of truth and mercy has arrived. Jesus, the Messiah, is the Sun of righteousness, arising with healing

beneath his wings. "The illustrious Day-spring," &c. He burst forth on the horizon of our benighted earth, and he goes forth, exclaiming with sublime energy, "I am the light of the world." The church under this dispensation,

1. *Has superior light.* "Life and immortality," &c. The glorious gospel shines—heaven is opened—the divine character unveiled—the way of mercy opened. Now have we Jacob's mystic ladder, for Christ is manifested as the way to the Father; he is the one way to glory, immortality, and eternal life. Now the pathway to blessedness is opened to a lost and dying world. "Behold, now is the accepted time," &c. The church now has,

2. *Superior enjoyments.* Greater light, but also greater comfort—better promises—richer gifts—superior influences; the dispensation of the Spirit, as one of sunshine and blessedness. Now, fogs and mists have passed away; the rains are over, and the winter passed and gone, and the time of the singing of birds is come, &c.

IV. THE CHURCH, IN HER MILLENNIAL GLORY, SHALL BE MAGNIFICENT AS AN ARMY WITH BANNERS. The term terrible, has been variously rendered. By some, "dazzling" as the starry host—awful as the streamers. In the 45th Psalm, it is equally inapplicably introduced. "Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things;" it ought to be wondrous things, or glorious things. So the church, in her latter-day splendor, shall resemble an army with her magnificent and victorious banners. Now, these truths are here implied.

1. *The church has her adversaries.* So has it ever been; so it now is, and will be, until the approaching of the end. All error is adverse; all superstition is so: all unbelief—all sin. There are the idolatrous armies of heathen nations; false systems of pagan worship; the antagonistical army of Mahomet; the army of unbelieving Jews; the armies of corrupted Christian systems; papacy; the Greek and Russian churches, and all state, earthly, ecclesiastical hierarchies; all infidelity and sin; all the powers of darkness, &c.; earth and hell—men and devils—ignorance and moral evil.

2. *The banner she displays.* Truth and love. It is implied.

3. *That the advances of the church shall be victorious and triumphant.* Of course, what is written of her Captain applies equally to herself; see two passages of Ezekiel. "He shall overturn," &c. Rev. vi. 2. It has been commanded by Jehovah of hosts. "Exalted be ye valleys, levelled be ye mountains," &c. that the glory of the Lord may be revealed. The light shall dispel every cloud of darkness; truth vanquish all error; holiness subvert all sin; peace annihilate all war; and paradise be regained; the tabernacle of God set up in our world; while angels and men all join in one wide-spread chorus, loud as the sound of many waters, "Allelujah! Allelujah! the kingdoms of this world," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Here hope finds a resting-place for her foot, and solid ground for her anchor, both for the past and present.* Great things have been effected in ancient and modern times—the east and the west, the north and the south.

2. *Our exalted privileges call for corresponding exertions.* Day is the period of activity, &c. Our mercies should make us the devoted followers of Christ. This highly-favored church, we are members of. What does Christ claim? What have we presented? What are our resolves? Who will consecrate themselves?

3. *The enemies of Christ must perish.* He must reign; he must conquer; he will have the dominion, and the glory, and the power. Oh! submit. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry," &c.

PRAYER AND DELIVERANCE.

"Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee."—PSALM lxxxi. 7.

THE literal reference of the passage is the oppressed state of the Israelites, &c., see Exod. ii. 23. Now, the text is equally appropriate to us. Let us make it our own, and see,

I. TO THE PERIODS OF OUR HISTORY WHEREIN IT IS APPLICABLE.

1. *To our state, when convinced of the evil and danger of sin.* When we saw our ruin—felt our misery—awoke to our danger—aroused to consideration. Then we called earnestly with great anxiety, and God delivered. He sent a message of peace; burst our fetters; spake the word

forgiveness; took us out of the horrible pit, &c.

2. *To our state when distressed by trouble of mind.* Perhaps beclouded—harassed—perplexed—soul disquieted, &c. "Then we called," &c. "He caused his face to shine," &c.

3. *To seasons of affliction.* Days of sickness—nights of pain, groaning, &c. Many reasons to desire recovery—"O spare me, that I may recover my strength," &c. He heard, and answered, and delivered. Our text will apply to bereavements—to temptations—to persecutions, &c.

II. THE EFFECTS THE REMEMBRANCE OF THIS SHOULD PRODUCE ON US. God remembers; we ought, but often do not. It is desirable we should do so.

1. It should make us grateful.
2. It should make us humble.
3. It should make us more dependent.
4. It should make us more believing and confident.

THE CHRISTIAN'S SUPREME DESIRE.

"Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."—2 CORINTHIANS v. 9.

A DESIRE to please and obtain the good will of others, is one of the innate feelings of the mind. When perverted or inordinate in degree, it leads to mental imbecility and vanity. The Jews were charged with "coveting the praise of men," and it is represented as a complete barrier to spiritual dignity and improvement, if we seek honor one of another. A due measure of this, however, is necessary and important. A good name is of great price. To be approved of by the wise and good, is ever worthy of our regard and attention; but this feeling is only rightly influenced when it seeks especially and pre-eminently the smile and approbation of God. This is what the apostle expresses in the text. "Whether," &c. This was the testimony Enoch had, before his translation, that he pleased God. We inquire,

I. WHAT IT IS TO BE ACCEPTED OF GOD? It involves,

1. *Our justification and adoption into his family.* In the sinful state we are condemned; also aliens afar off. Now we must be reconciled, pardoned, justified freely, &c. Brought nigh. Become his children, &c.

2. *It involves conformity to his likeness.* We must resemble him, have his nature and image. In this we were originally formed, &c. "This people have I formed," &c.

3. *It involves a constant desire to please him.* He must have daily homage, constant reverence, &c. He must be supreme, &c. Be the chief, &c. In all things have the pre-eminence. Thus God will love and delight in us—we shall be his treasures, jewels, portion, inheritance, &c.

II. HOW THIS IS TO BE OBTAINED. "Wherefore we labor," &c. Now there must be cultivated,

1. *The spirit of unfeigned humility.* "God resisteth the proud," &c. He abases the self-exalted—he that would be greatest must be as a little child—he dwells with the lowly—he honors those who are little in their own eyes, &c. The lifting up of the heart and imagination grieves him. All glorying and boasting offends his Holy Spirit—such fall into the condemnation of the devil.

2. *The spirit of earnest sincerity.* All pretence, or guile, displeases him. He desires truth in the inward parts. "This people draw nigh," &c. "God is a spirit," &c. There must be the avoidance of mere formality. Harmony between the lips, and heart, and life. What is called uprightness, integrity, thoroughness of character—reality of the graces—not spurious virtues—not mere show, &c.

3. *There must be spirituality of mind.* "To be carnally minded is death, &c., but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." The heart the temple of the Spirit—the exercises performed in the Spirit—the soul hallowed by the Spirit—the communion of the Spirit maintained. Now this is entirely opposed to a worldly spirit, or to a carnal spirit, or to a Satanic spirit.

4. *There must be diligence in the Christian life.* "Giving all diligence," &c. Diligence in the public, social, and secret duties of religion—diligence in prayer—in praise—in reading the word, &c. Diligence in the offices we hold—ministerial diligence, &c. Diligent deacons—diligent members—diligent that we may be found of him in peace. Spirit of apathy, loitering, &c., are displeasing to God.

5. *The exhibition of a spirit of goodness.*

and mercy. To do good, as the children of him, who is the fountain of goodness to the world. To imitate his benevolence, and beneficence, and pity, and compassion, and mercy. "Be ye merciful," &c. "Blessed are the merciful," &c. "But to do good and to communicate forget not," &c.

6. *A glowing zeal for his glory in the world.* It is good to be zealously affected, &c. To live greatly, yea chiefly, for this. To be zealous for his name, for his day, for his truth, and for his church and kingdom —a zeal that breathes, and lives, and burns, &c. Something like Christ's. Thus we shall not fail to be accepted of him. Consider,

III. SOME MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD INDUCE US TO LABOR FOR THIS.

1. *Because this is the very end of our being.* All other ends are subordinate to this. To enjoy—to be esteemed of men, and the discharge of the duties of this world, &c., are all inferior to this; the mind adapted to this—powers of reflection—emotions of love and veneration—the eyes, the tongue, and all the senses designed for this.

2. *Because this is the design of our redemption.* He redeemed us to, and for himself—redeemed from our vain conversation or conduct. He has bought us, &c. Not our own, or the world's, &c.

3. *This is the direct tendency of grace within us.* His Spirit within us leads, moves, incites to this—aids to this—produces this—every grace refers to this. Faith glorifies God—so hope—so patience, &c.

4. *This is the true dignity of religion.* To have God's good will, approbation, smile, favor, &c. No honor like this, crown of glory—diadem of beauty—elevation over all the distinctions of the world.

5. *This is the felicity of earth, and the bliss of heaven.* The sunshine of heaven within the soul God loves. God delights in me. The fulness and perfection of this constitutes heaven. No higher bliss for created beings. Christ was transported with it. Angels extol it. The concerts of heaven refer to this. Rev. xix. 4, &c.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. *What is the grand object of the Christian life.* Study it—ponder it—aim at it.

2. *Let the sinner seek it.* Through Christ —by faith—just now.

DEPRESSION AND HELP

"The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me."—PSALM CXVI. 6.

OUR text expresses the general experience of the people of God. Who cannot apply it to their experience at one time or other? The life of the Christian is diversified by changes, many of these are of an afflictive character, and tend to bring them into low and sorrowful circumstances, &c. Let us review some of these seasons, and see how the Lord hath helped us, &c.

I. WE WERE BROUGHT LOW BY A SENSE OF OUR GUILT AND DANGER. A state of sin is a low estate of degradation and misery. Horrible pit, &c. Previous to conviction, men are proud and elated. Often self-boasters. The gospel, which goes on the principle of our ruined state, makes men sensible of it before they are delivered from it. See David—Publican, Saul of Tarsus. Prostration goes before exaltation; mourning before joy, &c. He lifts such up, and delivers them.

II. BROUGHT LOW BY BODILY AFFLICTION. How soon is the body diseased—how frail, &c. How often most here have thus suffered; some many times. The Lord helped us—checked the disease—healed the malady—gave back health.

III. BROUGHT LOW BY TROUBLE. Sometimes in business—in circumstances—in family bereavements, &c. The Lord helped us, gave strength, and grace, and comfort.

IV. BY TEMPTATIONS. Often distressing, surprising, &c. Darts—arrows—torrents —sift as wheat, &c. The Lord sustained, delivered, &c. Thus fulfilled his own word, &c.

V. BY DOUBTS AND FEARS. These sink the spirits—darken the mind, &c. Bring very low, almost into despondency. The Lord helped—made his face to shine, &c. Applied some promise, &c.

VI. BROUGHT LOW BY INFIRMITIES AND SINS. All these frailties and sins sink and keep us low, and they would destroy our hope, &c., as they did our peace; but for the help of the Lord. He keeps, restores, &c. Our subject should lead us to gratitude and trust.

ON AN INCREASE OF FAITH.

"And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith."—LUKE xvii. 5.

ALL who read the scriptures must perceive the great importance attached to faith. It is represented as the first grand step in acceptable piety. "He that cometh," &c. It is represented as the principle of the Christian life. "Now the just shall live by faith." It is represented as giving potency to prayer. "Whatsoever ye ask in faith," &c. It is that which alone can prepare for solemnities of a dying hour. "All these died in faith." Then our attention may be well directed to the prayer of the text, "Lord, increase our faith." Faith and its increase; prayer to that end; and the reasons on which it is grounded, are the points to which your serious attention is solicited. Our subject leads us to consider,

I. FAITH. Faith may be considered as the credit given to testimony. A belief that what is stated is true. Christian faith therefore is the firm persuasion of what God has testified to us in his word. But it also is connected with reliance, truth, or dependence. That faith which is justly denominated saving or evangelical faith, is the credit given to the gospel testimony concerning Christ, and the soul's resting on the foundation there laid, for pardon and eternal life. Now faith must never be confounded with sight, for it has reference to things unseen. Nor with reason, which judges according to its own powers, and capacity, and information; an unscientific Hindoo could never comprehend the nature or possibility of ice. Nor with opinion; I may think this system is right, or give my assent to the other; but opinions are widely different to faith. Nor with impulse, the mere internal emotion or mental excitement. Neither must we separate faith from knowledge, the subject must be revealed, and that revelation known by us before it can be believed. But in reference to faith, notice,

II. ITS INCREASE. Faith may increase, —hence we read of weak faith,—of little faith,—and faith as a grain of mustard seed. Faith, like all other moral and spiritual principles and graces, is small in its commencement, and therefore its growth and culture must be sought.

1. *Faith may increase in clearness.* As we apprehend and understand the testimony more fully, so faith becomes more bright. As the character of Christ is more opened to us, will our confidence in him be increased.

2. *Faith may increase in its strength and vigor.* Weak faith falters, wavers, sinks, but by cherishing the principle of faith it grows and obtains a firm hold on the mind. We become settled and grounded in the truth. Adhere more closely and firmly to the founder.

3. *Faith may increase in experimental assurance.* The penitent believes, and is forgiven. Often especial need for faith; he is tempted, believes, and overcomes;—sorrowful, believes and enjoys comfort, &c These acts are repeated, and thus faith becomes more confident and ripens into experimental assurance. Let us look,

III. AT PRAYER HAVING RESPECT TO THIS ESPECIALLY. Now here let us guard against a common error,—we are not to pray for faith as if the whole rested with God's communications. He has already given us the testimony,—and the great object of faith,—and capacity and power to know and believe. But by spiritual influences he can excite to greater attention,—inspire with higher ardor, give power and success to the means. Cause his sun to shine and his dews to fall. Just as we pray for daily bread, yet toil and labor, and use the means. Such then are the views and feelings we should cherish in seeking an increase of faith. Observe, then,

IV. THE REASONS ON WHICH THIS PRAYER MAY BE URGED. Consider,

1. *The connection between strong faith, and the fruitfulness of all the other graces.* Just as faith is, so will hope be. So also will be love,—faith works by love. And so will be zeal, humility, and patience. Observe, also,

2. *Its influence on our various exercises.* Prayer, praise, reading and hearing, &c.

3. *Consider its essentiality in trying and difficult situations.* When our profession is tested. Perhaps forbidden to profess, or perhaps sneered at, &c. Look at Moses. he feared not the wrath of the king. Look at Peter and John, "We ought to obey God," &c. Or, secondly, when sacrifices are to be made. As Abraham who was called to leave his country and then to offer Isaac, &c. When the mysteries of religion are assaulted. Now as to the sublime

doctrines of Christ's divinity, or the atonement, or the Spirit's influence. Men grasp at these in the self-sufficiency of reason, and laugh, &c. Faith rests on the testimony, God is true, "the mouth of the Lord," &c. Or when suddenly attacked by powerful temptations, as Peter was. When his darts fly in every direction, we resist, steadfast in the faith. "Shield of faith," &c. Or when passing through dark and afflictive dispensations. Little faith will do in prosperity, in the calm, &c. But when adversity, the dark clouds, &c. No fruit on the vine, nor herd in the stall, comforts all fleeing, &c. It was faith that sustained Jacob, and Aaron, and David, and Paul, &c. Or in the midst of old age, infirmities, and approaching death. Faith waits as well as trusts. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. "We know that if this, the earthly house of our tabernacle," &c. He looks steadily and fearlessly at the swellings of Jordan, and sings,

"Fearless of hell and ghastly death," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the increase of faith be earnestly and daily sought.

2. To those who have it not. With all men who have not faith there must be guilt, and wretchedness, and despair. Oh! receive the gospel, &c.

THE PIOUS RESOLVE.

"I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings."—PSALM lxxvii. 12.

THE resolution of the text is worthy of our attention, for it is the language of an eminent saint, the pious and devout psalmist. He has been expressing his afflictions and sorrows, and his doubts and fears. He then resolves on the course he would adopt. "I will remember." "Then I will meditate," &c.

I. ON GOD'S DEALINGS WITH US, IT IS WELL TO MEDITATE. And here we shall be struck,

1. *With the graciousness of their origin.* He sought us—condescended to ask our love,—opened his heart and entreated. Oh yes, from him it sprung, and not us. Without worthiness or merit on our part. God's dealings with us are,

2. *Faithful in their continuance.* He has not left or forsaken,—he has not neglected or forgotten,—has not failed, &c. His dealings,

3. *Have been peculiarly forbearing and tender.* His mercy might often have clean gone. Provoked, he might have given us up. He might in wrath have cut us off as fruitless branches. Oh, how differently has he treated us, &c.

II. THE LORD'S DEALINGS TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE FURNISH PROFITABLE MATTER FOR CONVERSATION. "From the fulness of the heart." Conversation on the Lord's dealings,

1. *Has been the practice of the godly in all ages.* David. "Come all ye," &c. "They that feared the Lord," &c. Woman of Samaria. Disciples going to Emmaus.

2. *It is productive of good to our own souls.* It gives the soul relief. Improves the affections, &c. It is the right and best use of the gift of speech.

3. *It is often beneficial to others.* Who has not been edified by the conversation of the pious? "A word fitly spoken, how good it is!" It may enlighten and save in the sphere in which we move.

4. *It glorifies God.* God's name, and government, and cause, we honor. Silence is often guilt. The two must go together, meditation and conversation.

THE VARIOUS KINDS OF PRAYER.

"Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."—PSALM cxvi. 2.

IT has been well said, that prayer is the breath of the new man—the motion of the renewed heart, and is essential to the existence of Christian life in the soul. A prayerless individual is a rebel in spirit, and robs God of that homage which he has justly claimed from his intellectual creatures. Let us, then, consider the various seasons and times peculiarly appropriate to this exercise. But we first premise, that the Christian will be anxious to cherish constantly the habit and spirit of prayer. It is desirable to unite it with every important act of our lives; to be instant in prayer; yea, to pray without ceasing. We refer,

I. TO PUBLIC PRAYER—THE PRAYER OF THE SANCTUARY OF THE LORD. Within the

tabernacle and the temple public prayers were regularly presented. Who can read the consecration—the prayer of Solomon, without being affected with the true sublimity and hallowed grandeur which must have struck the congregated worshippers, 2 Chron. vi. 12–21. God said, "My house shall be called," &c. How solemn is the sight of a congregation in the act of prayer! Think of the Being addressed; see the humble appearance of the worshippers—the exercise itself. Who can tell the variety of feelings and emotions agitating the bosoms of the various persons present!

(1.) The minister prays for various orders and classes of *men*. For the disciples of the cross; the tempted—the tried—the feeble—the disconsolate, &c. For the young—for the aged, &c. He prays,

(2.) For various orders and classes of *sinners*. And there is in the congregation a mother, whose son is a prodigal; a father, whose daughter is dissipated—a trifler; a child, whose parents never pray; brethren, whose relations are out of the way, &c. He prays,

(3.) For persons in various *conditions*. For the sick—and some have their best beloved friends on the bed of languishing; for persons who are exposed to peril by sea and land—and some have friends on the treacherous deep, &c. Now, public prayer, designed as it is to be general, finds a response in the various hearts who unite in supplication before God. We,

II. Refer to Christian social prayer. The Jews had places set apart for prayer. Here it was where Paul and Silas found Lydia; out of the city, "where prayer was wont to be made." The early Christians, too, often assembled together for mutual prayer. These are very important exercises, and deserve the serious consideration of all the members of Christ's church. Now, here we remark, that it is the duty of the brethren to cherish the spirit, and cultivate the gift of prayer. No person should do any thing for God without diligently preparing for it, and doing it in the best possible manner. And what shall I say of the members of the church who ever neglect these sacred and profitable opportunities? What more *necessary* than prayer? What more *beneficial?* We know of no means by which the church can better promote its prosperity.

III. We refer to family prayer. If religious worship should be perpetuated, surely the family ought not to be without it. Joshua said, "As for me," &c. David returned to "bless his household." Even pagans love their household gods and family altars. Now, as to the frequency of family prayer, much must depend on the circumstances of the family. Some pious households have it at morning, noon, and evening; others, morning and evening; and others, only at one of these seasons. At any rate there ought to be family prayer—reading and thanksgiving. Family prayer ought to be exceedingly *simple*, and *easy* to be understood. It should also be *brief*, or children will feel it as a burdensome task. It should also be *regular*. Order and perseverance are essential in every good work.

IV. We refer to secret prayer. Private prayer is a grand and secret source of the soul's prosperity. It will be the key to public blessings; it is suited to full and free confession; it is a refuge to which we may have instant access. Eminently sanctifying, and enriching, and consolatory to the soul. All the really devout have been distinguished for it. Rules here unnecessary; none but God and the soul present; *at all times*.

APPLICATION.

1. Have we duly regarded these various seasons of prayer, and improved them?

2. Do you discriminate, &c.? This is of the utmost importance.

3. Let heads of families cherish the gift, &c.

4. Let all pray for mercy.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAY.

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."—Jer. xxxiii. 3.

Our text contains both a warrant and encouragement to pray. The words were addressed by the Lord to Jeremiah in prison; but the spirit of them is applicable to all the saints of the Most High. Prayer is both the duty and privilege of all the children of God—a duty most binding, a privilege most exalting and precious. Let us consider,

I. The exercise. And,

II. The promise in the text.

I. THE EXERCISE. "Call unto me." Now observe,

1. *Who calls to this exercise?* see v. 2. We do not wonder that he should call us to reverence, worship, praise, obey, &c. But in the text he calls us to pray, to ask blessings, &c., to be enriched by him, &c. Consider,

2. *Who are called to this exercise?* Jeremiah in the text, all Christians, all the children of God. The text supposes prayer may be undervalued, neglected, and that there may be intermissions, &c. We require to be stirred up, the fire may go out, or the mere form may exist. Indeed, in one sense, God desires all intellectual, fallen creatures to pray; he willeth the salvation of all men, &c.

3. *What is the nature of the exercise itself?* "Call unto me." That is, pray, ask of me, &c. Now this calling implies a *firm persuasion* that he exists, that he is accessible, that he can hear, that he is a rewarder, &c. It implies also a *sense* of our need, a desire for the good we want, and that desire expressed, made known in words to God. "Call unto me." Now this exercise is not limited to *place*. All places may be hallowed by the voice of prayer. Nor to *time*. On all occasions, and at all seasons, we may make known our supplications, &c. Three times, or seven times a day. In trouble or in joy, in health or in sickness, in prosperity or in adversity, in safety or in peril, &c. Then as to the *manner* of calling upon God. Should not there be *profound reverence?* unaffected *simplicity?*—sincere *earnestness?*—hopeful *expectation?*—We say nothing as to the brevity or length, as to extempore or being aided by useful forms; but let the soul and lip, the heart and spirit, be given up fully in the exercise. Notice,

II. THE PROMISE IN THE TEXT. "I will answer," &c. The promise is two-fold, "I will answer thee," &c. That is, I will regard and attend to thy call. It does not mean that God will invariably grant the request, or that he will immediately remove the source of complaint; but the prayer shall meet with the gracious attention of God, and, in the end, the suppliant shall be satisfied. There are two cases of very immediate answers being given to prayer. *Daniel*, see Daniel ix. 20, &c. In the case of *Peter*, Acts xii. 5–13. In many cases it is obvious that the answer is delayed, because we are not sufficiently intent, &c. But the best results shall always follow from our supplications. "God will answer." He can do so, he delights to do so, has he not done so? Then, in addition to the answer, the promise extends to *the revelation of wondrous things*. It was often in connection with the prayers of the prophets, that God revealed his mind and purposes to them. So, too, the high-priest only received the communications of the divine will in connection with sacrifices, offerings, and intercessions. *Solomon*, in answer to prayer, received the gift of a great and enlarged mind, so that he is renowned as the wisest of all mere men. This is the promise, "If any man lack wisdom," &c. It is also said, that "believers have received an unction from the Holy One," &c. Now observe, in answer to prayer,

1. *We may expect providential direction.* "Acknowledge him in all thy ways," &c. Thus God directed Jacob, gave much wisdom to Joseph, and enabled Daniel to be a revealer of secrets. God will guide his people by a right way if they call unto him

2. *He will enable them better to comprehend the meaning of revelation.* "Open thou mine eyes," &c. There is such an infinity of meaning, such wondrous heights, such depths, such profound mysteries, &c. It is written, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." Humility of mind and devotion of spirit, of all things, will fit us best for a right understanding of the word and will of God.

3. *God often gives bright anticipations of future glory.* The most elevated seasons are those associated with prayer. It was while praying that Christ was clothed with his transforming glory. Often saints, when on the verge of the eternal world, have had the most rapturous visions of the joys of the beatified, and the bliss of heaven. One striking case is recorded in the scriptures. Stephen, when being massacred, prayed, and the dying martyr exclaimed, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

APPLICATION.

1. *Does not the subject recommend prayer to the prayerless?*

2. *Does it not urge a more faithful regard to it on the prayerful?* It is the bulwark of our safety, the channel of our supplies,

and that which gives mental and moral greatness to the mind. It is the *priestly work* of Jesus Christ. He ever lives to pray, to make intercession, &c.

THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW.

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint," &c.—LUKE xviii. 1–8

THE parables of Christ were often designed to illustrate specific doctrines or duties. Several were designed to simplify the profound mystery of redemption in the love of God, and gift of Christ, to the world. The parables of the lost sheep and the marriage feast, were of this class. Others to show the true way of salvation, and the readiness of God to save sinners, as the beautiful parable of the prodigal son. Others the right modes and great advantage of hearing the gospel, as the parable of the sower. Not to proceed farther, our text is designed to urge the duty, and enforce the great importance of prayer. Often the moral or practical inference follows the parable, but here it precedes it. Let us look,

I. AT THE PARABLE ITSELF. Three persons are presented to us.

1. *A judge*, described as unjust—more properly a governor having executive power invested in his own hands. His character, "without fear of God." Under no religious restriction, acting irrespective of God's will or authority, "Nor regard for man." Had no respect to public opinion, treated with contempt the estimate others might form of him. By one of these evil principles he stifled conscience. By the other gave way to the most unjust decisions. Love of money might be his crying sin; or it might be love of pleasure, mental indolence. A worse character for a judge or governor you cannot conceive.

2. The second character was *a widow*—deprived of the desire of her eyes, the stay of her arm, and the counsellor of her mind. It has been ever accounted a glaring sin to oppress the widow, yet in Christ's time how common! How Christ charged the Pharisees with devouring widows' houses! A widow's sorrows and the orphan's tear, have often been produced by the unprincipled and avaricious. This widow had a suit, a case of obvious wrong.

3. The other person introduced is *her adversary*, or more properly her oppressor. "Avenge me," or "decide for me against my oppressor." For a while the judge had no regard. Probably her oppressor had influence or wealth to support him, and she neither. What little prospect of success! But she perseveres, persists in her plea. Her cry continues to reach his ear till at length he says, &c., v. 4 and 5.

II. LET US CONSIDER ITS DESIGNED APPLICATION. "That men ought to pray," &c. To pray—what is it? To tell God our wants, and seek his blessing—to pour out our hearts—to make known our requests. Let us look at some reasons why men ought to pray.

1. *Prayer is the language of nature.* All creatures have their respective modes of expressing their wants. The young lions, the birds of the air, &c. The crying of the child. Look at man in imminent peril. Look at man in deep suffering, and how natural is prayer!

2. *Prayer is recommended by sound reason.* Is it not reasonable that a child should depend and seek the aid of the parent?—That weakness should lean on strength?—ignorance look up to wisdom?—penury crave the aid of affluence? How dependent is man! How weak! How ignorant! &c.

3. *Prayer is an essential part of all religions.* The Mahommedan has his seven daily prayers. The pagan idolater prays. The savage in peril, &c., prays. The American Indian addresses the great Spirit. Shall not then Christians pray?

4. *Prayer is constantly urged in the volume of revelation.* It is the soul of devotion, and devotion is the very atmosphere of true piety. Examples are placed before us. Abraham, Elijah, David, the prophets, the apostles, &c. The Son of God our divine example. The spirit of prayer, the success of prayer, the various kinds of prayer, are all introduced to us here.

5. *Our necessities should induce us to pray.* What do we not need? Constant mercy, daily grace, ceaseless help. Weaker than a bruised reed, &c. Our text refers to the adversaries of God's people, v. 7, &c. Our adversaries and oppressors are many: the great adversary, wicked scorners, &c.; persecutors, &c. Now to contend with these, we are not able. What

must we do? Appeal to God, commit all into his hands. He will deliver you, justify you, and punish your unrepenting enemies. The text was literally fulfilled in the history of the Jews. In their destruction, &c.

We ask, *What encouragement the text gives to prayer?*

(1.) Consider the Being we address. Just, holy, good, our Father, Redeemer, Friend, &c., &c.

(2.) Consider our own condition. His children. Redeemed ones, and so much beloved.

(3.) Consider his tender compassion. He invites—he expostulates with us—he delights to answer prayer.

(4.) Consider his great promises; promises for every state and condition, and based on truth, power, and love.

APPLICATION.

1. *To the prayerless.* A state below the heathen. Practical atheism. Never to draw near to God. The wicked through the pride of his countenance, &c. *Notice some excuses*—Forget—cannot—feel sinful, &c.

2. *To those who do pray.* Let there be simplicity, fervor, perseverance.

MUTUAL PRAYER.

"Pray for one another."—JAMES v. 16.

PRAYER has been represented as consisting of a variety of parts. Dr. Watts and others, have shown that from scripture examples we should have respect to adoration, invocation, confession, petition, pleading, intercession, and thanksgiving, in our addresses to God. It is clear, however, that we have few instances where this rule has been fully and systematically observed by those whose prayers are recorded in the sacred pages. While we need not contend for these things as a fixed rule or system, yet it is desirable that we should study the models given in the Bible, and come as near to them as we can. Our subject refers to that kind of prayer called intercession, or in the words of our text, "praying one for another."

I. PRAYERS FOR ONE ANOTHER SHOULD HAVE RESPECT TO THE VARIOUS BRANCHES OF OUR FAMILIES. Parents should pray for their children, as Abraham did for Isaac and Ishmael. As Jacob did for his sons and grandsons. In like manner children should pray for their parents. Do not our offspring need the guarding and guiding blessing of Jehovah? And do not parents need the sustaining and comforting enjoyments of the divine presence? Brethren and sisters should pray for one another. Relations and friends should be mutually remembered at the throne of grace. There are perils and sorrows connected with all these associations. Nothing can sanctify them but praying one for another.

II. PRAYERS ONE FOR ANOTHER SHOULD HAVE RESPECT TO THE SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY OF THE FAITHFUL. We should remember our spiritual as well as natural connections. All believers are one family—one seed—one holy house, built up for an habitation of the Spirit of God. Their wants, enemies, and circumstances, are extensively the same. They are one body, of whom Jesus is Lord and head. Then they ought to pray one for another. The apostles were very solicitous to have the prayers of the churches. "Brethren, pray for us," &c. In another place, "and for me that a door of utterance," &c. In return, how often he avows his prayers for the church of Christ, see Rom. i. 9; Col. i. 3; Phil. i. 3. "Grace be with all them who love the Lord," &c. It is scarcely to be expected, that people can profit by the labors of any man for whom they do not pray. We should not look for a preacher being useful, however he might preach, if he did not pray for his people.

III. PRAYERS FOR ONE ANOTHER SHOULD RESPECT THE NATION IN WHICH WE LIVE. What is called patriotism is often a selfish thing—whenever a people would seek their own prosperity, at the expense of another nation's miseries and groans. Christian patriotism is a love of our country's excellence—a desire for our nation's real welfare and spiritual prosperity—a desire for national intelligence, righteousness, purity, and benevolence. Only such a nation is truly great in the sight of angels and God. In praying for our nation, what a variety of scenes rush before the contemplative mind! There are the *rich*, the *dignified*, and the *opulent*. What do they need? Why, every thing. Are they not, as to spiritual things, generally poor, wretched? &c. Oh! what peril they are in! Wha

a change as to their present state, if they die without an interest in the Saviour's love! Hence we are exhorted to pray, see 1 Tim. ii. 1. Then there is *the opposite class* of our fellow-countrymen. The great mass of the poor. The thousands of the sick, and wretched, and dying. Oh, how they need the divine blessing! How we ought to feel and pray for them! There is yet *another division*. The enemies of God. Blasphemers—the haters of Christianity. While we abhor and detest their principles, we should love and pray for their souls.

IV. Prayers for one another should regard the whole family of man. Our prayers should extend to all men. God's goodness does so—Christ's redemption does so—and so should our intercessions. What a sublime subject for devotional contemplation! A world in arms against God, under the power of the evil one—one dreary desert-savage ferocity, cruel paganism, senseless idolatry, sensual Mahommedanism—blinded Judaism, superstitious forms of Christianity; and only here and there a green verdant spot of purity. What has to be done before the mountains are brought low, the valleys exalted, and the world saved! "Lord, send out thy light and truth," &c. "Thy kingdom come," &c. In this vast world only here and there a Christian missionary. How should we not feel and intercede for them, and for an increase of laborers! Let me urge the exercise of mutual prayer upon you by a few considerations.

1. *We should thus pray for one another because it is the expressed will of God.* It is his command, therefore our duty. "God forbid that I should sin," &c.

2. *We should do so, because it will tend to our own spiritual improvement.* It will tend to soften our hearts—enkindle the tender emotions of sympathy—produce benevolent desires—make us more generous and useful.

3. *We should do so, because it will increase our conformity to Christ.* What a model have we in Christ! How he loved, and labored, and prayed! His last intercession for his murderers. Now, Christianity is Christ's mind in us.

4. *Gratitude for the prayers in which we have been interested should induce us to do so.* You cannot tell what you owe to this account. Eternity alone will develop it. To parents, friends, &c.

5. *It will procure for us the especial blessing of God.* Our affinity will be closer to Deity; our likeness greater; our enjoyments sweeter, &c. Do not forget to pray for yourselves, &c.

THE FERVENT PRAYER.

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."—James v. 16.

Our present design is to exhibit before you the powerful efficacy of those prayers which are earnestly and sincerely offered to the Lord. The profane live without fearing or acknowledging God; the formalist merely says prayers, and is a stranger to the spirit of prayer; the worldling asks, "What profit shall I have?" &c. To the righteous, there is the great assurance of the text, "The effectual," &c. Observe,

I. The character described. "The righteous." This is not one of man's natural characteristics. "None are righteous," &c. "All have sinned," &c. In order to the acquirement of this character,

1. *We must be accepted and justified by God.* Our guilt must be cancelled—all our sins forgiven. No longer culprits condemned, but freely saved by divine grace. This is the basis of all righteousness; this is that evangelical righteousness which we receive by faith in Christ Jesus, Gal. ii. 16.

2. *We must be renewed in our hearts.* A spiritual change must take place in the soul. "Old things," &c. "Born again," &c. "The heart of stone taken away," &c. A new heart implanted. Now this is experimental righteousness, and the root of all genuine holiness; for this includes the indwelling of the Spirit of God, the sanctifier.

3. *There must be righteousness of life.* A regard to God's righteous commandments; walking in his statutes and ordinances to do them. What doth the Lord require of his own adopted children? "Do justly," &c. He that doeth righteousness is righteous. "This is the love of God, that we keep," &c. Consider,

II. The prayer specified. Not every prayer, even of the righteous, of which our text speaks; but the "effectual fervent," &c. By some this is rendered "the in-

wi ight prayer of the heart." It clearly inc ides,

1. *Internal sincerity.* The opposite of formality; the opposite of double-mindedness.

2. *Impassioned ardor.* The opposite of listlessness; opposite of dulness and supineness. When the soul longeth, yea, fainteth after God. The apostle represents it as travailing in birth. Where the soul is inflamed, and burning with holy desire and powerful emotion.

3. *Importunate pleading.* Where the soul will not have any refusal or delay. Where every thing is argued and urged *with* God; such as his own nature. Promises. Christ's merits, &c. Former mercies, &c.

> "Lord, I will not let thee go,
> Till a blessing thou bestow:
> Do not turn away thy face,
> Mine's an urgent, pressing case:
> No, I must maintain my hold,
> 'Tis thy goodness makes me bold:
> I can no denial take,
> When I plead for Jesus' sake."

4. *Believing perseverance.* To pray with all prayer and perseverance; to keep the eye of faith fixed, and withdraw it not. The hand of faith held out and open, without wavering. With humble boldness standing before the gracious throne, asking until we have obtained the blessing for which we pray. Notice,

III. THE RESULTS AFFIRMED. "Availeth," &c. That is, they succeed extensively; gain the point; obtain the blessing. Let us cite two or three cases illustrative of this:—Jacob at Penuel, Gen. xxxii. 24–30; Moses at Rephidim, Exod. xvii. 8–12; Aaron and the plague, Num. xvi. 44; Hezekiah and the sentence of death, 2 Kings xx 1. Singular case mentioned in the life of John Knox. It is said Queen Mary feared his prayers more than all the armies of Europe. One night he and several friends were praying together; and as they prayed, Knox said that deliverance was come. He could not tell what, but he felt God was answering their prayers. The next day the news of Mary's death arrived. Let these examples suffice, with the gracious and positive assurance of the Saviour, "Whatsoever ye ask the Father," &c. We see that the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous has availed to the removal of evil—to the staying of wrath—to the accomplishing of victories—to the opening of heaven! Who does not see, then, how God has set his broad seal of approbation upon the exercise of prayer?

APPLICATION.

1. *How desirable to be acquainted with the achievements of prayer!* We should study these until we are filled with hope, &c., through believing.

2. *How we should cherish the spirit of prayer!* "I will pour out," &c. How desirable the grace of supplication! How necessary! How important!

3. *Let us endeavor to pray differently.* Aim at the fervent effectual prayer, &c.

4. *See the connection between prayer and character.* The effectual prayer of the *righteous*—such God will hear; and the prayers of such will increase their conformity to the divine nature and likeness. They mutually tell upon one another.

INTERCESSIONS.

"I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men."—1 TIM. ii. 1.

ALL Christians admit the necessity and importance of prayer. Indeed, prayer forms a part of every system of religion, whether true or false, in the universe. But prayer has a variety of branches, and is presented under various aspects. Our text includes several of these. Supplication signifies deprecation of judgments, or evils; prayer signifies petitions for blessings required; intercessions are addresses to God on behalf of others, for their defence or salvation. I wish us at this time to consider that branch of prayer denominated in our text, "Intercessions." Several questions will tend to open the subject to our understanding, and, I trust, profit.

I. WHO IS THE PROPER OBJECT OF INTERCESSION? "God." All worship must be given to him. The Father is chiefly to be addressed in prayer. The apostle says, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus." So Jesus taught his disciples to say, "Our Father," &c. Yet, we have instances of prayer to Christ, who in his divinity is equal with God, and may receive equal honor and worship. Thus Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive," &c.; and

added, "lay not this sin to their charge." Yet, viewing Christ as the Mediator, we say prayer should rather be made to the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ. All prayer to angels, or glorified spirits, is derogatory to Christ, and robs him of his intercessory work and glory.

II. On whom does intercession devolve? Upon all the people of God; all who pray for themselves. Of course, it is mockery to intercede for others, and neglect prayer for our own souls. All ministers and teachers of religion; all parents and guardians of youth; all deacons and officers of the church; all who love God and their fellow-men. Every Christian is to be an intercessor for others.

III. For whom should intercession be offered? Our text replies, "For all men." Our intercessions are to be as enlarged as the world, and as minute as every creature. Yet, we must classify if we are to feel this rightly. Intercessions seem demanded,

1. *For our kindred and friends.* This should be one part of the family compact—the golden girdle binding together. Parents for children; children for parents; brethren for sisters; and relations and friends for one another. This should follow, and ratify all our acts of kindness, &c.

2. *For the universal church of Jesus.* We may be particular and importunate for our own sanctuary, and minister, and friends, with whom we commune; we may be especially earnest for our own denomination; but it is a narrow, contracted, bigoted spirit, if it is thus circumscribed. The whole kingdom of Christ; the whole church of the Saviour; every disciple. "Grace, and mercy, and peace be multiplied to all," &c.

3. *For the afflicted portion of mankind.* I include in this the poor—the widow—the orphan—the prisoner—the exile—those thrown on beds of languishing—and the dying. We know that men are born to sorrow; affliction is the lot of all; much that none but God can relieve. All these suffering persons are members of the body; children of the same family, &c.

4. *For our civil rulers, and all in authority.* This is expressly mentioned; these are often objects of envy and dislike; but religion presents them as objects requiring our prayers, &c. Their stations are of very great responsibility; stations of imminent peril; numerous temptations; innumerable dangers; may be instruments of great good or evil; their hearts are in God's hands.

5. *In one word, for all mankind.* For our own nation; its spiritual elevation; its usefulness; its entire evangelization. For all Protestant nations, that they may be leagued in works of righteousness, mercy, and evangelical effort for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom. For all papal nations, that they may be restored to the pure religion of Christ. For all Mohammedan and pagan nations, that they may receive the true light, "even the saving knowledge of Christ Jesus."

IV. By what motives may intercession be urged? In each and all of these respects:—

1. *By the fraternal relationship which exists between all men.* We have all one Father—one identity of nature—one conformation—one in our dependence on divine providence—one in our eternal destiny. Speak not of localities—languages—color—religious rites, &c.; all are brethren. The soaring intellect—the grovelling savage—the profound philosopher—the roaming Hottentot—the enlightened Christian—the cruel cannibal—the crowned monarch—the starving beggar; yes! all are brethren.

2. *By the essential principle of the great law of equity.* "Do ye unto others," &c. Who does not desire it? I mean, what rightly regulated and informed mind does not? Is there not something soothing and cheering in it? Then let it be reciprocated. Let our intercessions join theirs, &c.

3. *By the example of the pious.* Behold Abraham interceding for Sodom; Moses for the Israelites; David for all flesh. His dying prayer, "Let the whole earth," &c. Look at the Saviour's life—a life of intercession; his prayer, "Thy kingdom come," &c. His work now, &c.

4. *By the command of God.* The text rests on the high mandate of the King of kings. He wills it—approves of it. It is good and acceptable. Of course, it will bring down his blessing upon those who engage it. It will conform us to his holy mind—assimilate us more to Deity—enlarge, expand, and better our souls. It is a healthy exercise—a pleasant exercise—

a profitable exercise. Another reason; see verse 4.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us each carry out the spirit of the text.
2. Avoid mere formality in this exercise.
3. Pray for the spirit of fervor and earnestness to be imparted to us.
4. Not forget our own souls.

HINDERANCES TO PRAYER.

"That your prayers be not hindered."—1 PETER iii. 7.

PRAYER is one of the essential exercises of the Christian life. True piety commences with prayer, advances in proportion as this spirit is maintained, and, in the language of one of our celebrated poets, "It is his watchword at the gates of death," &c. How important then to excel in this exercise; to possess, in a large degree, the spirit of prayer and the grace of supplication. It is especially important to guard against the things which militate against prayer, to set the heart intently on the practice of spiritual devotion, and to avoid every impediment to its constant and fervent exercise. I ground two propositions on the text.

I. THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IS DISTINGUISHED FOR PRAYER.—And,

II. THERE ARE THINGS BY WHICH PRAYER MAY BE HINDERED.

I. THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IS DISTINGUISHED FOR PRAYER.

1. *Prayer is one of the principles of the Christian character.* A Christian is a child of God. Prayer is both the breath and the language of the new nature. By the imparted Spirit we cry Abba, i. e. Father. Of Saul, as an evidence of his conversion, "Behold he prayeth." The new nature knows its weakness, its necessity, its perils, and therefore it prays. Prayer makes God's ability ours, God's fulness ours, God's omnipotent guardianship ours. Where there is carnal ignorance, there will be no prayer; pharisaical self-sufficiency, no prayer; but where there is an enlightened mind, and grace in the soul, prayer will necessarily follow. I observe,

2. *Prayer is a duty of the Christian character.* It is required by the Lord, he wills it, has enjoined it. His authority on this subject is found extensively spread over both the Old and the New Testament scriptures. "He will be inquired of by the house of Israel," &c.—he will have men always to pray, &c., to pray with all prayer, and without ceasing. Prayerlessness is disobedience to God.

3. *Prayer has ever been a prominent trait in the eminently pious.* It is clearly implied in the character given of Enoch and Noah—"walked with God," &c. Doubtless by communion, by daily, constant prayer. Abraham was celebrated for prayer, Jacob and Moses, Elias, David, Daniel, the apostles, and early Christians. Thus, too, new it beamed forth in the life of the Saviour he hallowed all his actions, works, miracles, &c. by prayer; spent whole nights in prayer; expired breathing forth merciful intercessions, &c.

4. *Prayer is indispensable to the comfort and prosperity of the Christian character.* Without it there must be darkness, coldness, barrenness, joylessness. It keeps up intimacy with heaven, opens the gates of glory, holds audience with the Eternal, wraps itself in the dignified garb of a royal priesthood, breathes the air of paradise, obtains the influences of the Holy Ghost, transfers to itself all the fulness of God. How we might enlarge and amplify on the sweetness, the bliss, the advantages of prayer. But we pass on to notice,

II. THERE ARE THINGS BY WHICH PRAYER MAY BE HINDERED. I need not refer to acts which are positively sinful.

1. *The dominancy of unsanctified temper hinders prayer.* Anger, haste, excitability, &c. All these hinder prayer. Prayer is essentially calm, solemn, meek, kind. The dove is the emblem of the Spirit of God. Not the raven, not the eagle, nor the vulture. Confusion of mind, perturbation of spirit, an agitated, foaming state of soul, is not fit for the divine presence, for holy prostration, for speaking to Deity. God abhors human passion and wrath; and if we are the victims of these, we may go to the mercy-seat, but the glory will be wanting.

2. *Worldliness of spirit hinders prayer.* Prayer is the ascent of the soul, the celestial rising of the mind, the leaving earth and earthly things behind. For the time

being, the soul is engrossed with the pre-eminent value of the Spirit and eternal things: it exclaims—"Whom have I in heaven?" &c. Worldliness paralyzes, clogs it, binds it to earth, &c.

3. *Strife, or an unforgiving spirit, hinders prayer.* The essential law of the gospel is, forgive and be forgiven. The words of Jesus fully illustrate these two points—strife, Matt. v. 23, &c.; and vi. 14, &c.—an unforgiving spirit.

4. *Levity and a trifling spirit hinder prayer.* Cheerfulness is quite in accordance with the spirit of the gospel; but levity, and foolish speaking, and jesting, are not only inconvenient, but deaden the affections; destroy the fine devotional tone of the feelings, and unfit for the exercise of prayer. This is a great snare to many professors, and often the forerunner to a backsliding state of heart before God.

5. *Neglect of God's holy word hinders prayer.* This is the Christian magazine, his storehouse; here are the promises, the examples, the words, &c.; here indeed are "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn." Sameness and deadness will characterize the prayers which are not supplied with materials from the oracles of God.

APPLICATION.

1. *How necessary to know the hinderances to prayer!*

2. *How important to guard against them, especially the hinderances in our own case!*

3. *Who dare live without prayer?*

4. *Who will now begin to pray?*

PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER.

"Continuing instant in prayer."—ROMANS xii. 12.

THERE are several passages which convey the same ideas to us with the text. "Praying always," &c.; and when the apostle says, "Pray without ceasing." As to the duty and propriety of prayer there can be no dispute. It is of indispensable importance; it must be the sign of our regeneration and adoption into the divine family; and it must be the closing expression of life's pilgrimage:—

"Our watchword at the gate of death,
We enter heaven by prayer."

There are two specia. particulars in the text: the frequency and perseverance prayer.

I. THE FREQUENCY OF PRAYER. "Instant." It cannot mean every moment; this is impossible; but it signifies,

1. *That we are often to be found in this exercise.* David prayed seven times a day; Daniel prayed three times a day; Christ spent whole nights in prayer. These seasons of prayer should be as numerous as we can make them,

"For who that knows the worth of prayer," &c.

2. *That we are regular in the exercise of prayer.* Order and regularity are very important. These are necessary in reference to food, sleep, business, &c. So also in reference to prayer; we should let prayer have its place and season.

3. *That we often engage in ejaculatory prayer.* The expression of desire in some short sentence, or even without words. The *mother*, when directing the affairs of her family; the *father*, when engrossed in business; the *traveller*, when setting out on a journey; the *worshipper*, when going to the sanctuary, &c.

4. *That we cherish and improve the gift of prayer.* By reading, and laying up the prayers recorded in the Holy Scriptures; by often meditating on this exercise; by praying for the spirit of prayer, &c. We are directed,

II. TO PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER. "Continuing." Not ceasing to pray. We should continue,

1. *Because our necessities and wants continue.* Ever in need—ever dependent; and we are to be supplied through the medium of prayer.

2. *Because our dangers continue.* Enemies without; darts of Satan—the world, &c. Our weakness, &c.

3. *Because our probation continues.* Depending on God, and praying to God, must be parallel with our probation. Cease praying, and our experience would be cheerless; hope darkened; comforts dried up; and the soul perish.

4. *Because the loving kindness of the Lord continues.* He never wearies in supplying; he can and will do more for us than we can ask or think, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let believers examine themselves as

to their praying. Is it fervent, instant, and persevering?

2. Let us seek largely the spirit of prayer.

3. Let the sinner now begin to pray.

SOCIAL PRAYER, OR PRAYER MEETINGS.

"Where many were gathered together praying."—Acts xii. 12.

This chapter is full of rich and instructive incident. The apostle James had been slain with the sword, and Peter had been cast into prison. The church of Christ exercised incessant prayer on his behalf. No human means seemed to be available for his deliverance; but by believing intercession, an appeal was made to the power and grace of the Eternal. That appeal was effectual, God sent an angel who delivered him from prison, verse 7. On his deliverance he immediately repaired to the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, verse 12. And it is to this place, although midnight, that the text refers. "Many were gathered together praying." This was a special Christian prayer-meeting; and probably it was by the influence of this prayer-meeting that Peter was delivered from prison, and spared to bless the church and the world. Our subject then is social prayer, or prayer-meetings. Let us consider the object, advantages, obligations, and objections, connected with prayer-meetings.

I. The object of prayer-meetings. The subject of prayer comes before us in the scriptures as a secret service. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet," &c. As a family duty, no doubt forming an essential part of family worship in every age of the world. As a part of public worship, "My house shall be called a house of prayer;" so the first Christians continued steadfast in prayer, &c. But prayer-meetings are seasons wherein the members of a Christian church agree to assemble especially for the offering up of their thanksgivings and supplications to God. We have a reference to such a meeting, Acts i. 14. Now the great object is to present prayer to God; but then especially the supplications of those who unite should have reference,

1. *To the present outpouring of the divine blessing.* Come to God hungry, and thirsty, and weary, and tired, and tempted, and a present blessing should be earnestly sought.

2. *To seek the prosperity of Zion.* That God may dwell in her, favor her with his richest gifts, choicest blessings, build her up, give her peace and enlargement. "O Lord, arise and have mercy on Zion," &c. —"Now, Lord, send prosperity," &c.— "O Lord, revive thy work," &c.

3. *To intercede for the afflicted and tried.* Those deprived of the means of grace, those in sorrow, in bereavements, in severely trying circumstances.

4. *To supplicate blessings on the other means of grace.* The preaching of the word; instruction of the young; the visitation of the sick; the distribution of tracts; the reclaiming of the inebriate.

5. *To plead for the conversion of the world.* That effectual doors of usefulness may be opened, the general ministry of Christ blessed, useful lives spared, sin dethroned, Christ's kingdom established, and the world saved. Now these should especially be the subject of supplication at prayer-meetings. Notice,

II. The advantages of prayer-meetings.

1. *They are adapted to secure the divine favor.* Prayer honors God. To meet especially for this, reflects lustre on the ordinance of prayer itself. God must approve. His presence and favor may be confidently expected. "Whatever two or three agree to ask," &c.

2. *They are often truly refreshing to those present.* Who has not found it a Bethel to his soul? How it elevates the mind, secludes for the time from the sublunary things of the world, brings us near to God! What mercies have been bestowed, and enjoyments communicated in prayer-meetings! Who that has attended often but might say,

> "I have been there and oft would go;
> 'Tis like a little heaven below."

3. *It improves the gifts of the brethren who exercise.* How many have thus become spiritually intellectual and morally great; how many have been raised up to bless the church, to be eminently useful! Here the talent has been laid out in much fear, and it has become five or ten talents.

4. *It promotes brotherly love and union*

Here there is the true spirit of sympathy; here tears mingle, and joys are interchanged; here the richest blessings are enjoyed at God's own banquet. Praying together betters the heart, and makes the affections more kindred and kind to one another. Notice,

III. THE OBLIGATIONS WHICH PRAYER-MEETINGS LAY UPON US. I mean, to attend them regularly, justly to prize them, and hold them in high estimation. I appeal to,

1. *Our numerous necessities.* Are not wants daily pressing upon us? Do we not need constant supplies? In constant peril, &c. Surely our exigencies should direct us to the prayer-meeting.

2. *Love to the cause of Jesus.* A large attendance would have a most favorable influence on the cause. They are essentially connected with the prosperity of the church. Love for that, zeal for that, should ever direct our willing feet to the prayer-meeting.

3. *A conviction of the value of divine influences.* God must bless all our efforts if they are to succeed. Here we come after the toils of labor, and the spiritual conflict, to lay the whole before God. "Not by might, nor by power," &c.

4. *To remind us of the services of heaven.* We are travellers, pilgrims, &c. Here we meet in concert, to urge our course towards the temple of the beatified. Eternity will be the duration of that assembly and worship in which we expect to engage. Consider,

IV. SOME OBJECTIONS TO PRAYER-MEETINGS.

1. *We can pray at home.* So you ought, and must, but this does not render prayer-meetings unnecessary. Those who love prayer-meetings pray most at home. You might say you can read the scriptures at home, and read sermons at home, thus give up public worship.

2. *Some of the prayers are not edifying.* Perhaps there may be some truth in that, but often the fault is in ourselves. We should not expect eloquence or learning, but simple, earnest, pious supplication.

3. *Our other duties are so numerous.* But how do you act if friends call to see you, or if you desire to enjoy yourselves in any recreation, or if you are sick, &c. These duties then give way, but not for prayer-meetings. Should not every member of the church of Christ, feel it both a duty and privilege to be present as often as possible.

APPLICATION.

1. *A word to those who conduct prayer meetings.* Guard against those things that render them uninteresting: long prayers, preaching prayers, scolding prayers, unconnected prayers. Prepare, read—especially the Psalms, meditate; be lively, direct, short, &c.

2. *A word to those who are present and do not engage.* Exercise Christian charity and candor, pray for those who pray, pray with them, &c.

3. *To neglecters of prayer-meetings.* Consider the subject, reflect, and see if it is not for your good to be present.

THE PROSPECT OF THE GODLY.

"Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty they shall behold the land that is very far off."—ISAIAH xxxiii. 17.

THE literal application of this prophecy is generally supposed to have reference to the deliverance of the Jews from the Assyrian army; and the happiness and joy of seeing Hezekiah again in his goodly apparel, and freed from the presence of the invader; and thus be left at liberty to enjoy their own pleasant and goodly land. The history is given, 2 Chron. xxxii. 21. But there is another application of the text which is not, I am sure, a perversion, or misapplication of it; we mean, to the beatific vision of the King of kings in the heavenly land. We purpose to forget king Hezekiah, and to contemplate only Jesus; to withdraw our thoughts from the land of Judah, and lift our eyes upward to the heavenly Canaan; and to contemplate the text as referring to the glorious privilege of all the people of God in a future state. Let us then consider,

I. THE GLORIOUS PROSPECT BEFORE THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF ITS REALIZATION And,

III. THE PREPARATION NECESSARY FOR ITS ENJOYMENT.

I. THE GLORIOUS PROSPECT BEFORE THE CHILDREN OF GOD. "Thine eyes," &c. Now, the prospect respects two things; the vision of Christ, and the heavenly Canaan

1. *The vision of Christ.* Christ is King

His royal personifications are often exhibited in the Holy Scriptures. He was typified as such by Melchisedec, who was king of Salem; he was also typified by David and Solomon, monarchs in Jerusalem; he is often thus described. God says, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." "I speak of the things which I have made touching the King." "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty! with thy glory and thy majesty." "Behold the King," &c. "Behold thy King cometh," &c. He was thus inquired of: "Where is he that is born?" &c. He confessed it: Pilate—"Art thou a king?" "Thou sayest it; but my kingdom is not of this world." We see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, &c. He is "King of kings." Prince of the kings of the earth, &c. But he is to be seen in his beauty; in all his regal splendor and magnificence. Patriarchs and prophets saw him in human form, having the likeness of a man. The Jews saw him in his humiliation, "As a man of sorrows," &c.; the apostles and disciples saw him in his risen glory; John saw him in the vision of Patmos, Rev. i. 13, &c. Now, all his people shall see him in all the splendors of divine majesty, &c. His resplendent crown—his majestic brightness. Not as a sufferer; not with a crown of thorns; not with a reed; not prostrated with anguish, &c. They shall see him clearly, fully, eternally, &c.

2. *They shall behold the land, &c.* This was typified by the land of Canaan. Was that a rich and luxurious land? So this, of banqueting and abundance; the tree of life, and the rivers of pleasure. A land of freedom, after the slavery of Egypt? so this, a city of unnumbered immunities and privileges; no toil, &c. A land of triumph after unexampled warfare? so this; here all the inhabitants from earth, who have lived to maturity, were warriors, &c.; all virtuous, &c. A land of rest after the toils of the desert? so this is the true rest for the people of God. Was it here that the magnificent temple was erected which God filled with his presence and glory? so this land is all consecrated; it is all temple, &c.; one vast sanctuary. Now, this is the prospect of the persons considered.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF ITS REALIZATION. The text is positive, &c. "Thine eyes shall," &c.

1. *This was contemplated by Christ in our redemption.* He designed our emancipation from Satan's vassalage, and from the dominion of sin—our deliverance from this present evil world; and also our elevation to his glorious kingdom, Heb. ii. 10. Hear also his prayer, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me," &c.

2. *This is repeatedly the subject of the divine promises.* Not to dwell on the promises of the Old Testament, let us look at a few in the New. Christ said, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father hath appointed me." "Fear not, little flock," &c. "In my Father's house," &c. "Be thou faithful unto death," &c. "I give unto my sheep," &c.

3. *To this tends the work of grace, in all its influences on the soul.* Our calling—is to God's eternal kingdom, &c.; our regeneration—"Begotten again," &c.; our sanctification—"That we may walk with him in white," &c.; our faith—"To look and realize a better world;" our hope—"To expect a city," &c.—our affections—"Risen with Christ;" our hearts in heaven, &c.

4. *A goodly number are now enjoying the fulfilment of these promises, &c.* The patriarchs and prophets; the apostles and martyrs; the confessors, &c.; early Christians; our fathers, &c. Let us stand on the hallowed ground of revelation, and "Behold the great multitude," Rev. vii. 9; also verse 14.

5. *The glory and joy of Christ would not be complete, without the eternal salvation of his people.* We have referred you to his prayer, &c.; but remember the covenant. "He shall see of the travail," &c. These are his ransomed ones; these his gracious conquests; these his joy and crown, &c.

III. THE PREPARATION NECESSARY FOR ITS ENJOYMENT. This may be our application. Nothing is necessary in the way of merit; or price; or self-righteousness; but if we would see the King, &c. then,

1. *We must make him the object of our believing, affectionate regard now.* Looking to him now, &c.; looking to him in our constant experience; setting the Lord always before us, &c. The glorified in heaven once followed the Lamb, &c. And this looking must be that of lively faith, fervent love, and cheerful obedience. "If we would see the land," &c.

2. *We must seek and labor for its attain-*

ment. Now they desired a better country, &c. Labor, therefore, to enter, &c. Be diligent, that ye may be found, &c. Travel to it, by persevering in the ways of piety. Go from strength to strength, &c. I conclude with two questions :—

1. *Who are the expectants of these glorious enjoyments?* Oh! rejoice; go on the way to Zion with songs, &c.

2. *Who will now set out on this heavenly pilgrimage?* There need be no exception. None too young—too old, &c.; none too unworthy, &c. We are journeying to the place, &c.

JACOB'S VOW.

"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee."—GEN. xxviii. 20–22.

How many incidents crowd upon us in this chapter! Isaac dismisses Jacob that he may escape the wrath of his brother Esau. Having received the paternal prayer and blessing, he departs for Padan-aram, the residence of his uncle Laban. After the first day's journey, he proposes a resting-place for the night. His bed is the earth, his pillow a stone, his curtains the outstretched canopy of heaven. The scenes of that night are then recorded, the vision of the ladder, the address of Deity, and the consoling engagements of God to go with him, to keep him, and to bring him again to his father's land. Then we have the hallowed exercises of the morning, "he rose early," &c. verse 18; afterwards the vow which he made, "And Jacob vowed," &c. Observe the vow itself, and the terms of Jacob's stipulation.

I. THE VOW ITSELF. A vow is a solemn engagement made with another; a religious vow is such an engagement made with God. Vows should relate only to lawful things; they should be made with great caution, in the spirit of sincere piety, and with prayer, for the assistance of God's grace to perform them. Jacob's vow included three things.

1. *A consecration of himself to God.* "The Lord shall be my God," I will recognise his claims upon me, I will obey his commandments, I will yield all the homage of my mind, the affections of my heart; he shall be with me, and to me the supreme; I will have no other gods than the true God. Pagans have their imaginary deities, their idols; the wicked worship, some one thing and some another; one gold and silver, one pleasure, another Bacchus, another fame, &c. But how vain, how foolish, how impious, how ungrateful, for any of these to be our God! He who made us should be our God, he who preserves us, and in whom we live, &c.; he who redeemed us by the gift of his Son, he who will be our judge, &c., should be our God.

2. *He engaged to keep a memorial of this consecration.* "And this stone," &c., see verse 18. As a remembrance of the place of audience, no doubt his after devotions would respect that pillar. When he returned that stone should be the memento, &c. So, our consecration to God should often be remembered, in our daily devotions, especially on the Lord's day, in his sanctuary, more particularly at the Lord's table, and especially on such days as this, when we again enter on the religious duties of another year; at any rate the consecration of ourselves to God must not be forgotten.

3. *A devotion of a part of his substance to holy purposes.* "And of all that thou shalt give me," &c. He recognises God's agency, does not refer to his own skill, or toil, or success, but that "thou shalt give me"—a tenth of this "I will give unto thee." The first instance of this is recorded of Abraham, Genesis xiv. 18–20. Afterwards it was a Jewish rite, for the support of the priesthood; but as the priesthood passed away with the Levitical economy so there is no mention of tithes in connection with the New Testament dispensation, but the principle of devoting a part of our substance is still recognised, and is essential to a right state of heart—it is called a sacrifice—"To do good and communicate, forget not," &c. How can we do it? To the Lord's cause, by supporting the institutions of religion; and also to the Lord's poor—"Whoso giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." God claims a part of his gifts to us for these purposes. But observe,

II. THE TERMS OF JACOB'S STIPULATION. These terms are strikingly reasonable, and

such as Jacob could urge from the divine engagements to him, verse 15,—the divine presence, divine provision, and his return to his father's house.

1. *The divine presence.* "If God will be with me." Moses fervently desired this, and said, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." God's gracious presence is necessary to our guidance, it is not in man who walketh, &c.; necessary to our protection, "Keep me," &c. If God be with us and for us, who, &c.—necessary to our comfort.

"In darkest shades, if he appear,
My dawning is begun," &c.

This alone can give success to our engagements, &c. If the house is built the Lord must build it, &c. He stipulated,

2. *For divine provision.* Yet see how moderate, bread to eat, &c. He sought not dainties nor luxuries, but necessaries only, having food and raiment, &c. Thus Christ's prayer, "Give us this day," &c. These are all we can reasonably and rightly enjoy; these are pledged, "Thy bread shall be given," &c. "If God so clothe the grass of the field, &c., shall he not much more clothe you." He stipulated,

3. *For his return to his father's house.* This attachment was natural. Now all these points were regarded by Jehovah; he did grant Jacob his presence and kept him, he supplied all his wants, he brought him to the land of his fathers, and that too in peace. See the application of this to the Christian, John xiv. 1–4.

APPLICATION.

1. *Have we avowed ourselves to be the Lord's?* If not, do so now, this service; if so, renew the vow.

2. *God will sanctify such a dedication, and follow it with his blessing.* All needful good here—his presence—bring us to his own house and glory.

THE GOSPEL VISION

A SABBATH SCHOOL SKETCH.

"And the Lord answered me and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it."—HAB. ii. 2.

It is probable that Habakkuk lived in the eventful times of the reign of Manasseh, or when that monarch was carried captive to Babylon. The prophecy is one of peculiar grandeur and magnificence; several of the passages are of unrivalled sublimity. But it is evident, that several of his predictions had reference to the gospel dispensation, and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. Verse 14 clearly points to the glorious establishment of the Saviour's empire in our world. He represents himself as a watchman, he declares his purpose; he will watch to see, wait till God shall speak and direct. He does so. God reveals his mind, directs the prophet how to act. From the quotation of the fourth verse, in three of the epistles of Paul, we feel justified in applying the whole to the revelation which God has given us in the gospel of his Son. Observe, then, the nature, the form, the clearness, and the designation of the gospel revelation.

I. THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL REVELATION. "The vision." Something which passeth before the sight, scenes which are representative of what shall hereafter be realized. Thus Isaiah's vision of the glory of God in the celestial temple, Isaiah vi. 1; thus Ezekiel, i. 1; thus the scenes described by John as beheld in Patmos. Now the glorious scenes of the gospel dispensation passed before the eyes of the prophets. *As seers* they were allowed to behold and proclaim the events connected with the redemption of our world. The birth, the mission, the life, the sorrows, the miracles, the teachings, the sufferings, the death, the resurrection, and the glory of Christ, were all included in the visions of prophecy. The gospel itself is a vision, to which the attention of mankind is to be directed. It has three distinct features, and in each of these we are deeply concerned. Now the gospel revelation,

1. *Is a divine vision.* A revelation from God; a system of light, emanating from the Sun of righteousness. "God, who commanded the light," &c. The gospel bears its divine impress on it; it has the mind of God in it, the glory of God round about it Wherever the gospel comes it may be said "Arise, shine," &c.

2. *It is a vision of mercy.* Not of justice, not of terror, not of wrath. Some of the visions of the prophets represented the judgments of God. Many of John's visions were of this awful character. In the gospel visions, Deity is arrayed in the habiliments of tenderness and mercy; *the Father*

appears bending over his lapsed and miserable creatures, solicitous for their salvation. *The Son* appears as the Lamb slain, bearing away the guilt of the world. *The Holy Spirit* appears in the form of a dove, hovering round the wretched with the olive branch of love and peace. *Angels* appear intensely delighted; and while you behold the scene, there is suddenly heard, in heavenly strains, "Glory to God in the highest," &c. In this vision is written, in burning, indelible characters, "God so loved the world," &c.

3. *It is a vision of hope.* It is encompassed with the word of promise; it is illumined with gracious invitations and precious promises. With this vision is lit up the whole of our sepulchral world; a vision of hope to every nation, and people, and tongue. Of hope to every sinner. The gospel proclaims a ready and all-sufficient Saviour to every child of man. Notice,

II. THE FORM AND CHARACTER OF THE VISION. "Write the vision." Now in every age God has spoken to mankind. He spake to our first parents, to Cain, to Noah, Abraham, Jacob, &c. Now all these communications were precious. But it was the will of God, for the benefit of all the world, that these visions should be *written*.

1. Thus the revelations of God would be more certain, not so liable to be lost or corrupted, &c.

2. More permanent. Written and deposited with the church, all the words of God might be preserved and handed down from parents to children, and from generation to generation.

3. More available. In this way the statutes of God can be carefully consulted and meditated upon; not only hear it in the sanctuary, but study it, &c., at home. Yet how vastly more valuable has the written word become by the art of printing, by which myriads of copies have been multiplied, and the number increased, till the earth may be full of the knowledge of the Lord, &c. Notice,

III. THE CLEAR AND INTELLIGIBLE FEATURES OF THIS REVELATION. "Make it plain," that is, easy to be understood. How necessary this to the unlearned, to the diversified capacities of children, to those who only begin to reflect in old age! Now the Bible does contain scenes of overwhelming grandeur, depths fathomless, heights of celestial infinitude. But the gospel vision is plain; look at the discourses of Jesus, his parables, prodigal son, lost sheep, good Samaritan, the sower and seed. Look at the commands of the gospel, at the invitations, promises. Hence the common people heard Christ gladly. The way of salvation, how plainly written; like a royal highway, leading from one city to another, so that a wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err. The folly and sin of ambiguous preaching; "Make it plain," do not mystify or embellish, so as to perplex, &c.

IV. THE DESIGN OF THIS REVELATION. "That he may run," &c. This passage is seldom quoted right, generally supposed to read, "That he that runs may read," &c., they put the running first. Now the gospel never will save man, if he remains in a heedless, inconsiderate state, &c.; it must be heard or read with attention. And it is to be so plain, that when a man hears or reads it, he may see the way so clearly as to run in it. Now the great end of revelation is experimental, practical religion. Thus the *cross* is to be lifted up, that men may see and be saved; thus the *pathway* to bliss and glory, that men may run in it, and be guided to eternal life; thus the *name of the Lord* is to be made known as a strong tower, that they may run into it and be saved; thus the ways to the city of refuge were wide and plain, that the manslayer might escape the avenger of blood. For this we preach, that you may be saved. This is the one end of the gospel, the great design. LEARN,

1. *How thankful we should be for the gospel.* Where there is no vision the people perish, &c. We could better spare the stars and the moon, yea, and the sun, and live out a few years in darkness, than be deprived of the Sun of righteousness. How sweet and precious is light, but especially the light of the gospel!

2. *Is the great end answered in all present?* Have you received and obeyed the gospel? Does its light illuminate you? Are you the children of the day? Is your path bright? Do you run cheerfully and gladly? Do you prefer it in your hearts? This is the season of exercise and hope. We should run. Blessings so precious, life so short, opportunities so uncertain.

3. *Sabbath school teachers.* Be admonished and directed by the text. Write the vision on the understandings, memories, and hearts of your children. Be plain, be ear

nest, repeat, &c. You are not to be satisfied *till they run.* But then you must *allure;* draw them after you, not stand and point, but say, "Come with us," &c. Who does not see the necessity of all this for the young? Who can tell the share these schools have had in altering the mental and moral aspect of our country? I commend this subject to the children, to the parents, especially to the church of God.

THE SAINTS' AMPLE PROVISION.

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."—PHIL. iv. 19.

"GODLINESS," says the apostle, "is profitable unto all things," &c. It not only interests us in the spiritual blessings of divine grace, but secures to us all the favors of a benign providence, and in the world to come introduces us to life everlasting.—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God," &c. True religion requires that we trust God in all things. We are to trust in him forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Few passages contain more comfort than the one we have selected for our text—"But my God shall supply all," &c. Notice,

I. THE NATURE OF THE SUPPLY PROMISED. Now this is to meet our *need*, our *exigency*, and *misery*. Now need and wishes may be very different. Need and supposed *wants* may be very dissimilar. We may wish, and imagine we want things which would be injurious, &c. God supplied all the need of the Israelites in the desert, but not all they craved and murmured for. Between need and wishes, there is often almost an infinite disparity. Real necessities are very limited, but wishes may be endlessly multiplied. Now a Christian's need includes,

1. *Sufficiency of temporal good.* David said, "The Lord is my shepherd," &c. "They that seek the Lord," &c. "Their bread shall be given," &c., Matt. vi. 25, 33. Now this also includes all good to our persons and dwellings. "There shall no evil befall thee," &c., Psalm xci. 1, &c. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper," &c.

2. *Supply of spiritual blessings.* Our souls have their wants, &c. We need spiritual bread and spiritual raiment. We need light, and power, and help. We need protection, support, and comfort. We need grace every moment to aid, and keep, and sanctify, &c. This supply extends to all your need, and it shall be seasonable,—suitable,—ample,—and everlasting. "He will give grace to help," &c. "My grace is sufficient," &c.

II. THE AUTHOR OF THIS SUPPLY. "My God," &c. Just think,

1. *Of his exhaustless resources.* "Riches of his glory." He possesses all things, the universe is his. The sea, and the dry land,—earth and heaven. How vast his territories! How boundless his domain! Never diminished. We have two symbols, the sun and the ocean. Both have met the design of their great originator through all ages. God is the same throughout all generations. Then think,

2. *Of his infallible knowledge.* He knows all your need. He has numbered all your hairs. All your condition is before him. He sees you every moment. Can never be mistaken. Wherever you are, your Father's watchful eye is over you. Think.

3. *Of his infinite goodness.* "He is good, and his tender mercies," &c. He supplies the beasts, insects, &c. All nature. His enemies. "Causeth his sun," &c. Contrast him with your fathers, and if they know how to give good gifts, &c. Especially think of his love in the gift of Jesus. "And if God spared not his own Son," &c. Notice,

III. THE MEDIUM OF THIS SUPPLY. "By Christ Jesus." Christ is the head of his people, and all vitality, and all communion, flow to them from him. Our supplies are,

1. *By virtue of his merits.* Sin cut off the connection between God and man. Christ opened it. By his obedient life, and death, he opened a channel for the love and favor of God. Our life, and all its benefits; earth, and all its blessings. Heaven and all its glories come to us entirely and exclusively through Christ Jesus.

2. *Through the influence of his intercession.* "God hath exalted him," &c. "He hath ascended on high," &c. His gracious advocacy averts wrath, postpones judgment, secures divine long-suffering, keeps mercies flowing. He makes known all the wants of his people, presents all their petitions, and pleads their cause constantly. All our benefits are through Christ Jesus.

3. *Spiritual supplies are in connection*

with our union to Christ Jesus. "I am the vine," &c., John xv. 1, 5; see also John vii. 37, 39. As Christ is one with the Father, so we must be one with Christ, we in him, and he in us, and thus all our supplies will be by Christ Jesus.

APPLICATION.

1. *What comfort the text contains for all the people of God!* "God supplies all our need, will do it, out of his riches," &c. Not according to our merit, but by Christ Jesus.

2. *By humble and believing prayer this supply is obtained.* "Be careful for nothing," &c. "Ask, and it shall be given you."

3. *This supply demands our hearty and unceasing praises.* Should we not in every thing give thanks? Oh, praise the Lord, for he is good, &c.

4. *Invite the sinner to receive God's pardoning and renewing grace.* "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c.

GOD THE SHIELD AND THE REWARD OF HIS PEOPLE.

"After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abraham; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."—GEN. xv. 1.

GOD is every thing to his people that they need. Hence the representations he has given of himself are just adapted to the various circumstances and conditions of his saints. Poor, he is the fulness of their supply. Weak, he is their almighty strength. Ignorant, he is their fountain of wisdom and knowledge. Their inability is met by his sufficiency—their guilt by his mercy, —their unworthiness by his grace. Are they soldiers—he is the captain of their salvation. Travellers—he is their guard and guide; children—he is their Father and God. Abraham had just been in conflict with the four kings, and God had given the victory into his hands. It is probable his mind was agitated by the events of the warfare. How desirable, how seasonable, then, was consolation and peace! That was afforded him by the address of God in the text. "Fear not," &c. Observe the peril supposed, the counsel offered, and the promise given.

I. THE PERIL SUPPOSED. Fear is the feeling excited by the approach of suffering or danger. Abraham might justly apprehend this. The Christian life is exposed to this; our dangers are the repeated topics of this blessed book. There are three sources of spiritual peril.

1. *From the powers of darkness.* Hosts of the fallen angels are engaged in waging war with the saints. Hell is arrayed against the church, and against each member of the church. To this end there are stratagems of allurements. Satan's wiles, his devices, his snares. Thus he ruined the first human pair, and since then countless myriads. His fierce attacks—horrid temptations, the fiery darts of the devil. When he labors to darken, to confuse, to distract, to incite the passions, to lift up to daring presumption, or sink into despair.

2. *From the influence of the wicked.* Their smiles, friendship, truce with God and religion; or, their persecuting attacks, scoffs, ridicule, envy, hate, violence, &c. Now in some of these forms we shall assuredly meet with peril from the men of the world. We cannot evade or avoid it.

3. *From the weakness and infirmities of our own hearts.* Here extra vigilance is indispensable, were we even arrayed in original purity, or were we established by lofty spiritual attainments. But alas! our leanness, our weakness, &c. The unsubdued foes within—much for Satan to take advantage of—much to be influenced by the world. Well may alarm take possession—well may dread often surprise, or fear dishearten. Consider,

II. THE COUNSEL PROPOSED. "Fear not." It cannot mean, be not solicitous, or be not vigilant; but, be not the victim of despondency—of afflictive fears. Be not discouraged, but be strong, magnanimous. Be of good courage.

1. *Fear not so as to be robbed of your comfort.* Fear will do this. Enjoyment and apprehension of danger, are incompatible. Tranquillity and comfort are wedded together. To lie down in peace is impossible, with great internal anxiety. It is the will of God that we should have an undisturbed rest and peace by the Holy Ghost.

2. *Fear not so as to give advantage to your enemies.* Fear paralyzes—hands hang down —knees tremble — heart fails — the foe rushes in, and the victory is easily attained. Ours ought to be the language of old, "I

will not fear what man," &c. "In the name of God I will do valiantly."

3. *Fear not so as to neglect the means of safety.* Fear confuses, and prudential means of security are forgotten. Reading the word is one, hearing the gospel is another, meditation and prayer are other means, exercise of faith, &c. Now if we neglect these through fear, the enemy must prevail. If we fight, we conquer; but if we neglect to do so, we are overcome. Observe,

III. THE DECLARATORY PROMISE GIVEN. For so it may be regarded. "I am thy shield."

1. *God is the shield of his people.* This is often presented to us in the word, very often repeated, and doubtless intentionally so. We need it. Shield, a defensive piece of armor, by which the warrior wards off the strokes or darts of the enemy. God is this to his people, their defence. He is the shield of *all* they are or have; soul, body, family, estate. He is their shield *always;* God omnipresent, never far off; round about at all times. *Effectual* shield, nothing can destroy it. "If God be for us," &c. "He that is for us, is more," &c. *Unchangeable* shield. In life, sickness, death. Every instant, no variableness, &c. Think of such a shield, and then ask if fear is not unnecessary.

2. *He will be their reward.* Or "greatly" reward them. Constancy, perseverance, and fidelity, God will reward. The racer shall have the garland—the victor the crown. "Be thou faithful," &c. But there is a rich sublimity about the text. "God will be their reward." His love—his goodness—his peace—his smile. In God is all enjoyment, and this shall be ours. It must therefore be great; as great as the Godhead. As vast, as high, as profound, as comprehensive as the Deity. "Exceeding" great. Exceeding all we can deserve, or desire, or speak, or think. See that splendid passage, Eph. iii. 20. Then it will exceed all time, and run parallel with eternity itself. What a promise, what bliss, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Our subject belongs to the children of God.* To each and all. Oh take it, make it your own; let it be your beam of joy—your stream of comfort.

2. *The sinner has every thing to fear.* God as judge—as avenger, &c.

3. *Let the penitent lay hold of God's strength and live.* He will say, Fear not, I have blotted out, &c.

MUTUAL SYMPATHY.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."—GAL. vi. 2.

THE Christian religion is full of glory to God, and full of good-will to man. True religion is heavenly in its origin, and equally heavenly in its tendency. Like that stream which rises first collected from the ocean by the magnetical water-spout, then borne on the wings of the wind to some distant part, and after having descended in rain upon the earth and run in streams until having gained the channel of the river, it is on its passage again to its native ocean. But do you not perceive that in thus retiring to its native ocean, it has fertilized the thirsty earth, and thus has been rendered a blessing both to man and beast; so true religion while it descends from heaven and leads to heaven, yet it makes the Christian a blessing to every sphere in which he may move in the world. After God blesses a man he always makes him a blessing. Among the range of benevolent Christian duties, is the one in the text, "Bear one another's burdens," &c.

I. THE BURDENS OUR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS MAY BE CALLED TO BEAR, AND HOW WE MAY ASSIST THEM. The figure is a very plain and simple one. A man has a very oppressive load, he can scarcely stand beneath it, his condition and grievance attract our attention, we run to his relief and raise one end, and then the man is relieved and able to bear the rest without pain. Supposing you saw a person in these circumstances, would not common humanity induce you to help? Then "bear ye one another's burdens," &c. Let us see the burdens our Christian friends may be called to bear, &c.

1. *They may be called to bear the burden of poverty, and we should give them all the aid in our power.* Every age and country, and dispensation, has had its poor. Under the law God made express provision for them. The vast majority of believers are poor. There must be therefore a great deal of suffering amongst the poor in the church of Christ. We shall see how this is to be met, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2; Acts ii. 44.

&c. This is also spoken of by John, 1 John iii. 17.

2. *They may be called to bear the burden of sickness, and they should have our sympathy and prayers.* None can take away the pain, but, oh, how sympathy lightens the load—how friendly countenances illumine the darkness—how friendly hands impart as it were fresh courage and hope! Then to feel that while we are at the throne of grace, our Christian friends are there, there saying, "Lord, bless our afflicted friend," &c. Why we feel that the affliction will terminate rightly. "The fervent effectual prayer," &c. To have the great Advocate in heaven, and so many advocates on earth, &c. James expressly says, that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick," &c.

3. *They may be called to bear the burden of reproach, and we must assist them by our countenance and support.* Christ has declared, that they that will live godly must suffer persecution. The psalmist exclaimed, "Reproach hath broken my heart." An ungodly world will speak all manner of evil, &c. And sometimes these creep into the church, wolves in sheep's clothing—vicious serpents, of the brood of the devil—busy-bodies, tale-bearers, railers, false speakers. And then the scene spoken of by James is realized, see James iii. 6. Now we are bound to be jealous for the Christian reputation of every brother and sister. Silence when they are maligned is criminal, and the heart that is wounded with the poisoned arrows of slander ought to be encouraged, and bound up, and comforted.

4. *They may labor under the burden of sin, and then must we labor for their spiritual restoration.* See v. 1. See 1 John v. 16. The Lord by Moses has told us what we are to do, Lev. xix. 17. "Thou shalt not hate," &c. Oh, how many have been driven from the church by the unfriendly course adopted by their brethren, and have at last sunk into apostacy, saying, "No man careth for my soul!" How did Jesus act with regard to his disciples who fled—with Peter, &c. How does a father act with his frail children? How do we act with the diseased members of our bodies, &c. "Brethren, if any man do err from the truth," &c., James v. 19.

II. THE MOTIVE ASSIGNED. "And thus fulfil," &c. The Christian Law is one of 'love." This is the royal law, it comprehends all others—bears every thing else with it. There are many reasons why we should fulfil this law.

1. *Obedience to Christ.* We call Christ, Master; but why, if we do not the things he has commanded?

2. *It will tend to conform us to the mind of Jesus.* "Behold my servant," &c. "He shall not break," &c. He went about bearing the burdens of the sons and daughters of misery. Giving the multitudes food—sick, health—family of Bethany, sympathy, &c.

3. *It will make us exceedingly happy.* God will smile—Jesus bless—the spirit enrich—conscience approve. Heaven in the soul.

4. *We may look for others to aid us if placed in similar circumstances.* "Blessed are the merciful," &c. But he that showeth no mercy shall have judgment without mercy. "For a good man," &c.

5. *Christ will superabundantly reward us at the last day.* Christ is one with all his members. "Head over all," &c. Feeling all the evil and all the good done to every saint.

APPLICATION.

1. Our subject reproves the unfeeling and selfish. 2. Let it excite to compassion and benevolence.

MODERATION IN GRIEF.

"And they that weep, as though they wept not."—1 COR. vii. 30.

THE apostle has been treating at large on the advantages and disadvantages of the married life, during the state of the church's trial, and also giving full directions for the right development of the relative duties, especially where the husband or wife might be an unbeliever. In the midst of his discourse he suddenly breaks forth in this abrupt yet powerful address. "But this I say," &c. Our sojourn here will at most be but transitory. No condition or relationship in life should cause us to forget the brevity of life, the evanescence of time, and from this we should cultivate a constan moderation of spirit in all the engagemen and conditions in which we may be placed. While we affectionately discharge the duties of the domestic circle, let us remember

how liable this scene is to change, and therefore, "let those who have wives," &c. Then he proceeds to the sorrows of life, and says, "and they that weep," &c. Observe,

I. THE SORROW SUPPOSED. And,
II. THE SPIRIT RECOMMENDED.

I. THE SORROW SUPPOSED. "And they that weep," &c. By the entrance of sin, the whole creation is burdened with grief and suffering. Man born to sorrow—the world is one wilderness of anxiety—one valley of tears. The sources of sorrow are innumerable. We are vulnerable at all points—exposed in all situations. Perhaps we may look at three or four classes of sorrow.

1. *Personal.* From bodily affliction, pain, and languishing. Many persons scarcely know what it is to enjoy a day's health, a day's physical enjoyment. Weakly frames affected by every change of the weather.

2. *Domestic.* Sorrow from our families and connections in life. Our house not with God as we could desire. Unbelieving, irreligious children, &c. Domestic affliction—domestic bereavements—domestic strife. Or our sorrows may be,

3. *Secular.* Those which arise from the affairs of life. From business distractions, losses and disappointments. Even the pious, with all prudence and care, are often thus circumstanced. Or the sorrow may be,

4. *Spiritual.* From a sense of our own barrenness, weakness, infirmities, sins. From a deep concern for those around us. Solicitude for the church—for the neighborhood—for the world. Think of these four channels of grief, &c. And observe,

II. THE SPIRIT RECOMMENDED. Now mark, it is not to refrain from weeping—does not pronounce it sinful; tears are as natural and proper as our joys and songs. Weeping has been sanctified by the tears of prophets and apostles, and by the tears of the anointed of God; for Jesus wept. Religion is not to harden, to render us callous, to make men Stoics. It produces tenderness, renders sensibility more exquisite, &c. But whatever may be the occasion of our sorrow, our weeping should be moderate, even as though we wept not. Let us ascertain when,

1. *Our sorrow may be deemed excessive and immoderate.*

(1.) When it prevents the discharge of the duties of life. When persons sit down to mourn, and forget the claims of their friends, and of society, on their labors and attentions.

(2.) When it causes us to neglect the means of grace, to neglect the Bible, the house of God, Christian conversation, prayer, &c.

(3.) When it eclipses our mercies, and when we neglect to acknowledge the blessings which remain. The mind dwelling only on the troubles and afflictions, and not remembering the blessings which are continued to us.

(4.) When we murmur and bitterly complain. Exhibiting an unresigned spirit. Reflecting perhaps on God.

(5.) When we refuse to be comforted, and allow sorrow, like a disease, to prey on the mind. Injure our health, blighting all our affections, &c. Drowning our comforts, &c. Now in all these instances the sorrow is immoderate, injurious, and offensive to God. Let us inquire,

2. *Why our sorrows should be moderate.* "Or weep as though," &c.

(1.) On account of the number and value of the blessings which we have received. Our blessings have been countless—daily loaded. Days of health—of enjoyment—of happiness, &c. Are these to go for nothing? "Shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord," &c. A reckoning and survey of these should ever mitigate our grief, and brighten the darkest scenes of sorrow and trouble.

(2.) On account of the overruling providence which has to do with all our crosses. Many of our griefs are directly from the Lord. His appointments, his chastisements; the rest are permitted and allowed for wise purposes, &c. To weep excessively is to reflect on God—to impugn God—to be dissatisfied, &c. Now are not all his ways wise, righteous, and good? Then surely we should weep as though we wept not.

(3.) On account of our deserts, which God in mercy does not reward. Let us look at our troubles, how numerous, heavy, deep, keen, &c. But look at your sins. Examine your claims, think how it might have been with you, then ask, "Why should a living man complain?" "The Lord hath not dealt with us," &c. "It is of the Lord's mercies," &c.

(4.) On account of the pernicious influence of excessive sorrow on the interests of religion. Consider that we profess religion is to sustain, to cheer, to invigorate. But if we sorrow even as others, then religion is dishonored, and inquirers after it discouraged. The history of Christianity has fully exemplified the efficacy of the grace of God to sustain and comfort. Look at the statement, 2 Cor. iv. 8, &c. Now excessive grief blights the graces, and is pestiferous to all the holy emotions of internal piety.

(5.) On account of the transitoriness of all the afflictions of this life. "Affliction endureth but for a night," &c. But momentary. Our sorrows are like passing clouds, flitting, and transient. Then let us weep as though, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. To contend with the troubles of this life, divine grace is pledged and provided. God's grace is sufficient for us under all circumstances, &c. God is our refuge and strength, &c.

2. Have you all wept on account of sin? This should be deep and influential, working repentance unto life, &c.

3. Let us contemplate that bright world, where God shall wipe away all tears, &c.

MODERATION IN JOY.

"And they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not."—1 Cor. vii. 30

We have previously considered the importance of moderation in the sorrows of life. It is possible to run into the other extreme; to be indifferent to the prudential lessons which trouble should teach us; to be reckless of all events; to sink into a state of apathy, &c.; or, it is possible to cherish a volatile spirit, and to aim at hilarity of heart, when there ought to be seriousness and reflection. Joy is proper and desirable, in its season. It is as the sunshine of the mind; but it may be excessive, and thus be baneful in its effects. We should rejoice, therefore, as though we rejoiced not; or in the language of holy writ, "Rejoice with trembling."

I. Let us contemplate legitimate Christian rejoicing.

II. Show the principles by which it should be regulated.

I. Let us contemplate legitimate Christian rejoicing. "They that rejoice," &c. Now observe,

1. *The Christian is called to rejoice.* Therefore it becomes one of the dignified privileges of the Christian's life—a kind of holy duty. This is repeatedly impressed upon us, &c. It is urged, that we should rejoice in the Lord, and again rejoice, &c. "Rejoice evermore," &c. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." There are many declarations of a similar kind: "Light is sown for the righteous," &c. "We rejoice, in hope of the glory of God." "Whom having not seen, we love," &c. "They that sow in tears," &c.

2. *The Christian has many occasions of joy.* The government of God over all the affairs of the universe—"The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice," &c. The beneficent care of God; the Lord careth for you. To these things should be added, the manifestation of the love of God; a sense of his divine favor; experimental enjoyment of his blessed Spirit bearing witness, &c.; the divine engagements on our behalf. To hear prayer—to keep—to guide—to sanctify—to save—and give eternal life. Now, these are all rich topics of rejoicing.

3. *The rejoicing of the Christian glorifies God.* It exhibits his goodness and his grace; it shows forth his praise; it is a declaration of the happiness of his service—the easiness of his yoke—the pleasure of his ways.

4. *Rejoicing will be one of the chief elements of glory.* "Everlasting joy shall be," &c. "In thy presence is fulness of joy," &c. "Well done," &c. "Enter thou into the joy," &c. Now, this kind of joy we may fully cherish. But there is another kind of joy which is very different, yet quite lawful, and doubtless that to which the text refers; a joy arising from the circumstances in which Providence may place us. The possession of health and reason is a just ground of joy; the possession of a competency; the possession of domestic peace, and friends; the possession of the means of mental recreation and improvement; books, &c. Now, to this kind of rejoicing the text, of course, chiefly refers. We

must rejoice as though, &c. Observe, then,

II. THE PRINCIPLE BY WHICH IT SHOULD BE REGULATED.

1. *Temporal rejoicing must ever be subordinate to spiritual joy.* Spiritual health—spiritual understanding—spiritual riches——spiritual peace—spiritual friends—spiritual privileges. Now these must have the ascendency; these the pre-eminence.

2. *We must rejoice in these only as sublunary good.* They want permanence—not abiding; must not rejoice in these as being certain and sure. Who would rejoice much in the passing gleam—over the beautiful, yet fading flowers—over a transitory pleasure?

3. *Our rejoicing must not interfere with the discharge of Christian duties.* It must not prevent prayer—meditation—reading the word—attending on the means of grace.

4. *Our rejoicing must not interfere with the pious exercises of the soul.* There is the exercise of watchfulness—holy vigilance. The exercise of confession of sin; of repentance; daily sorrow for our iniquities, &c. The exercise of self-denial and mortification; the exercise of sympathy with the afflicted, &c. To feel and bear the burdens of our brethren, &c.

5. *Our rejoicing must not exclude the solemnities of religion.* The last and momentous concerns of every responsible being. Death, with its awful realities; judgment, &c. "Flee from the wrath to come." Now, these subjects require peculiar seriousness of mind; they ought not to be forgotten; therefore, we should rejoice, as though we rejoiced not.

APPLICATION.

1. *The joy of sin and sinners is vain and delusive.* Men may rejoice in that which pertains to glare, and the vanity of this world—in its pleasures, riches, fashions; but this must be short-lived. It is ever in direct collision with conscience, and God's Holy Spirit. This is not like the shining sun, brighter and brighter, &c., but a glimmering taper, &c. "The candle of the wicked shall be put out." The joy of the wicked terminates in darkness, &c.

2. *True religion and happiness are connected.* True, intelligent, solid joy, and piety are wedded together. Who, then, is seeking enjoyment? It is here. The kingdom of God is joy in the Holy Ghost. Here are the right grounds of joy.

3. *In proportion to our religion, will be the amount of sterling enjoyment.* Then be diligent and holy, and thus be happy, &c.

MODERATION IN BUSINESS.

"And they that buy, as though they possessed not."—1 COR. vii. 30.

RELIGION is often considered as something distinct from the ordinary movements of life: something for the closet—or for the Lord's day—or for affliction—or death—or eternity. So far from this view being correct, religion is a holy principle, intended to be interwoven with all the affairs of life. It is to be an every day, yea, an every hour concern. It is to be identified, indeed, with the closet—with the sanctuary—with the sabbath—with sickness, &c.; but it is to influence our conduct—to hallow our thoughts—to regulate our desires—and to give integrity and moral excellency to the business transactions of life. Hence the apostle insists, in our text, that in buying, we are to trade in the spirit of Christian moderation. Let us inquire,

I. HOW A CHRISTIAN SHOULD TRANSACT THE BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF LIFE.

II. HOW HE SHOULD REGARD HIS POSSESSIONS IN THIS WORLD.

I. HOW A CHRISTIAN SHOULD TRANSACT THE BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF LIFE. Now, in the business affairs of life,

1. *We must be actuated by the principles of justice and equity.* "Do ye unto others," &c. All extravagant statements in selling or in depreciating; all attempts to impose on the ignorant, in dealing. Every business transaction should be honorable, open, and upright. The sins of selling and buying are exceedingly numerous, and deeply offensive to God. A good man will abhor all these.

2. *We must not cherish too much eagerness of spirit in business.* Attention, and diligence, and prudence necessary, &c. But this is not to be the mainspring of the soul—the absorbing principle. We read of those who make haste, &c.—who are all avidity, &c. It is requisite to give only a subordinate attention. With many it affects their sleeping, and eating, and enjoyment of life. This is extreme folly.

3. *We must not allow it to encroach on the religious duties of life.* Reading the word—family worship—attendance on the means of grace—a strict regard to the whole Sabbath. Now, it must not rob God of his claims, &c. "Seek first the kingdom of God," &c. "Labor not for the bread that perisheth," &c.

4. *It must not monopolize the affections of the heart.* "Love not the world," &c. A man's trade may be his idol; supplant God, and eternal things. "Set not your affections on things beneath," &c.

5. *The affairs of business should be transacted in God's fear, and in remembrance of the final judgment.* Every word—every thought, &c., will be judged; all our transactions in life. How necessary, then, to labor in God's fear—to keep a conscience void of offence, &c. We must stand in company before the bar of God. "God will render to every man," &c. Thus ought we to transact, &c.

II. How we should regard our possessions in this world. Now, the profits or riches arising from trade are to be held as though we possessed not; so, also, all our temporal means. The great truth is, we are but stewards. Nothing is really and absolutely our own. We hold it in trust only, for the discharge of certain duties in life. Our possessions are lawfully expended,

1. *In obtaining for ourselves the necessaries of life.* Food—raiment, and the other needful blessings, for the sustenance of the body, and the improvement of the mind. These claims must be first met.

2. *We must regard the necessities of our families and dependents.* "If any man neglect to provide for his own," &c. In this class, poor and afflicted relatives should have a place.

3. *We must regard the circumstances of the poor and distressed around us.* These we are to consider, remember, and help. God demands it; they are his poor, and our fellow-creatures. Neglect is sin—unmercifulness, &c. The poor of the church have the first claim, and ought to have the first place.

4. *There are the spiritual interests of Christ's cause and kingdom in the world.* To help those who labor in the gospel; to circulate the word of life, and consecrate a portion of our means to the glorious kingdom of God's anointed. The gold of Sheba is to be given to Christ. The liberal soul shall be made fat, and by liberal things be established. I never knew a person distinguished for this, who was not specially happy and fruitful. All this is to hold our temporal things as though we possessed not. Now, why should we do so?

1. *Because they are not the chief good.* They cannot make happy; not suited to the soul. May have them, and be wretched and miserable. Of the earth, earthy; refer only to this vile world. What contempt the Saviour poured on these things!

2. *Because they are of uncertain continuance.* Hence called, deceitful—uncertain; "make to themselves wings," &c. How many have been bereaved, &c.! Then, surely, the text is wise and proper.

3. *Because they are often spiritually pernicious to the soul.* Often eat as a canker; blight the moral verdure, &c. Lead to arrogance and self-esteem. Lead to vanity and show; to worldliness and avarice; to supineness and spiritual sloth. Exceedingly difficult to be saved with these; have caused myriads to make shipwreck. How hard for a rich man, &c. All history is fraught with the peril of riches to the soul. How needful, then, the text!

4. *We shall very soon have done with them.* Look at that estate, what owners it has had; how one has succeeded another, they have all died, and left it behind. "We brought nothing into this world," &c. So it will be with us. The place that knows us now, &c., others must occupy, &c. Then, ought we not to hold, as though we possessed not, &c.?

5. *We are professedly heirs of the riches of glory.* The spiritual durable riches of eternity; the inheritance that fadeth not away; the kingdom that abideth forever, &c. Now these are suitable—sure—ecstatic—everlasting, &c. Ought not these to raise our minds, &c., above the treasures of time? When heaven is in reversion, it will not be difficult to hold with a loose hand the possessions of time, &c.

'There is my house, and portion fair," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let the subject be the test of examination.* How are we affected and influenced by the business affairs of life, and what hold have the possessions of earth upon us?

2. *The supreme excellency of religion* "Godliness is profitable to all things," &c

"Godliness, with contentment, is great gain."

3. *Let moderation of desire, and affection, in regard to the things of this life, distinguish us from others.* They have no other good, &c. Men of the world, who have their portion in this life, &c. Oh! seek the Pearl of great price. Buy gold, that thou mayest be rich, &c.

THE SUBLUNARY CHARACTER OF THE WORLD, AND THE USE WE SHOULD MAKE OF IT.

"And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."—1 Cor. vii. 31.

Our subject is very kindred with that we last considered, buying as though we possessed not. But it takes in a wider range, for it refers to the proper use of the whole world in which we live. In the world, we must have to do with it; it is the manner and spirit of conducting and regulating this, that the text refers to. We may, we ought, to use the world, but we may not, we ought not, to abuse it. Let us, then,

I. Look at the right use of the world.

II. At the abuse of the world.

III. The reasons for the use, and against the abuse of it, assigned in the text.

I. Look at the right use of the world. It is rightly used,

1. *When we contemplate the wisdom and goodness of God displayed in it.* It is everywhere visibly impressed with the finger of Deity; it is full of design, beauty, and excellency; it presents endless matter for philosophical and scientific investigation; its size, its diurnal and annual revolutions; its place and position in the solar system; its variety and verdant surface; its continents and islands; its oceans and rivers; its mountains and valleys; its mineral productions; its wonders and curiosities; its atmosphere; its splendid and star-bestudded canopy; its bounties and blessings in the form of food, and enjoyments for its millions of inhabitants. Oh, it is a wonderful world! the whole earth is full of the divine bounty. With all its variety of clime; with all its tempests, and volcanoes, and earthquakes; with all its deserts and wildernesses, it would be a happy, joyous world, but for the existence of human depravity, and the reign of the prince of the powers of the air.

2. *We use it, when we thankfully enjoy the blessings of divine providence in it.* It is not only the region of existence, but of enjoyment; not only of life, but of pleasure. Now God hath given this as a rich domain to man; for him he sends the sunshine and the shower; for him all the variety of the seasons, filling his heart with joy, &c. Now, it is the will of God that his goodness should be received and enjoyed in connection with the exaltation of his blessed name. "Every creature of God is good when sanctified," &c.

3. *We use it, when we make it the place of passage to a better.* It is not our rest, nor portion, nor continuing city. The mariner abuses the ocean if he is always at anchor, &c. The pilgrim abuses the way to the holy festivities, if he rears a dwelling and advances not on his course. The creature abuses God's gift, if he worships it instead of the Creator: so with the world, we are to sail over it to the better land. We are travelling through it to the celestial Canaan; we are to enjoy its blessings, but adore the Giver, and to allow the gift to allure us to the residence of the great and blessed Donor.

4. *We use the world when we try to improve it by our residence in it.* God is raising it, exalting it, renewing it, but he is doing it by the influence and talents of his people in it. God blesses them, and makes them a blessing. The world is dark, and they are to shine; polluted, and they are to be its preserving salt; condemned, and they are to be its intercessors. By their spirit, they are to condemn its sin; by their lives, to allure to the ways of godliness; by their influence, to convert its inhabitants; and by their prayers, to bring showers of blessings on it. Are we making it better? Are we thus using it?

II. What is abusing it?

1. *Living in it without improvement.* Without increasing in knowledge, without answering the end of our existence in it, without preparing for a better world.

2. *When we thankfully receive its blessings.* Surely God deserves to be acknowledged and praised; yea, from the rising to the setting of the sun. But how many live without? These speak of themselves

or their parents and ancestors, but are "without God;" never own him, nor bless him, nor serve him. Surely this is abusing the world.

3. *When we set our hearts upon it.* The love of the world is idolatry; it cannot exist with the love of God; it is a God-dishonoring and God-excluding sin. It will expose its devotees to the doom of the world, be burnt up. We may know if our hearts are on it,

(1.) By our anxieties to get it and retain it.

(2.) By our conversation about it.

(3.) By the time and toil we devote to it.

(4.) By our sorrow at the loss of any part of it. Now these are sure and unerring signs of love to the world.

4. *We abuse it when we live as though we should never leave it.* How many do this; cannot bear to talk or think of leaving it; call things by their own names, and act in all things as though they would never be called out of it. Yet what can be more foolish or idiotic? I refer not to men making a sinful use of it, making it the scene of their ambition, pride, lust, &c. We all know that thus it is abused.

III. The reason for the use, and against the abuse, assigned in the text. "For the fashion," &c. The word fashion is taken from the shifting scenes of the diorama, when first one representation and then another passes before you, until the whole dioramic representation is ended. Our own renowned dramatist has beautifully stated this—

> "All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players.
> They have their exits and their entrances,
> And one man in his time plays many parts."

In the world there is a constant change of characters, and therefore it is not to be trusted to, or depended upon. Look at it; now sunshine, then storm; now spring or summer, then autumn or winter; now all gay, then all gloom; now al smooth, then all raging and terrific; now all smiles, then all frowns; now all health, then all sickness; now all joy, then all tears; now all life, then all death. There is the sickly child, and there, the tortured sire; there the gay festive banquet, and yonder the drear sombre tomb; there the mansion of magnificence and splendor, and yonder the cot of squalid misery. Who would love it, idolize it, depend on it? Rather trust the rising wave, the flitting sunbeam, the passing breeze. Oh no, "the fashion of this world," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Heaven is the region of stability and eternal blessedness.

2. Seek it, live and prepare for it.

THE DIVINE REQUIREMENTS.

"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."—Micah vi. 8.

The prophet inquires in the preceding verse in what way and manner he may come with acceptance before God. He then refers to burnt-offerings, &c., and asks if these, if offered upon a grand and extensive scale, will recommend to the divine favor; or, if the offering of human sacrifices, the fruit of the body, would propitiate for the sin of the soul. Now, it is a palpable fact, that among the vilest and most cruel of the human race, sacrifices and religious rites have been presented to their varied sanguinary deities. It is not however these, whether presented on the rural altar, or in the temple of thousands, that can avail, instead of the great practical duties of life. Services, however regularly performed—sacrifices, however costly, God will reject, if the heart is not the seat of devotion, and the life of practical godliness. He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; really, intrinsically good. Good for its possessors and for society; good, as resembling God, the perfection of all goodness. "Do justly," &c. Let us, then, refer to these three essentials of genuine piety.

I. Justice. "Do justly." This, doubtless, refers to our conduct towards our fellow-men. It *includes a right course* of action in the various stations in which the providence of God may place us. As such it is exceedingly comprehensive, and will embrace and be found connected with all the events of life. It includes truth, sincerity, honesty, &c.

1. *There is civil justice.* Existing between rulers and people. Those in authority are responsible for the enactment of righteous laws, and the administration of universal equity. Then, there is loyal obedience and subjection to magistrates and

all in authority. Christ clearly taught this, when he said, in reference to the tribute money, "Render," &c.

2. *Commercial justice, or our conduct in reference to the pecuniary transactions of life.* Now, this includes both buyers and sellers. It is a violation of this to take advantage of the ignorance or the inexperience of those with whom we deal. We never need misunderstand this principle, if we apply Christ's golden rule, "Do ye unto others," &c.

3. *Relative justice.* Now, this extends to the various stations, &c., of life. It includes parents and children, servants and masters, brethren and sisters, &c. Now, on all these subjects the word of God is full and explicit, so that he who runs may understand, &c. Now, to "do justly," must be the constant and unvarying rule in all matters, to all persons, and at all times; in lesser as well as in greater affairs; see Rom. xiii. 7, &c.

II. Mercy. "Love mercy." Now, this includes,

1. *Kindness to the poor and wretched.* This was extensively exhibited under the old dispensation; we have chapter after chapter on it. The poor, the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless, are never to be forgotten. "Blessed is he who considereth the poor," &c. See, too, how the apostle enforced the same, &c. "We should remember," &c. "Pure religion," &c.

2. *Compassion towards our enemies.* Now, this is extremely difficult, as it is the very contrary of what the natural heart would dictate. Not railing for railing; not slander for slander; not evil for evil; not cursing for cursing. See Matt. v. 43, &c.; see also Rom. xii. 17.

3. *Unfeigned charity towards all men.* So that we love all men; would not injure, nay, ready to do good to all; feel interested in all; pray for all; rejoice to promote the happiness of all. Now, this is not to be professed merely, but practised; yea, not only *practised*, but *loved*.

III. Humility. "Walk humbly," &c.

1. *By cherishing self-abasing thoughts of ourselves.* Pride is the natural bias of the mind. There is *spiritual* pride; pride of talent, or knowledge, or merit. All this is odious to God. Jehovah hates it—he loathes it; nothing can compensate for it; it spoils all. We must be abased. Our ignorance—our weakness—our sins ought sufficiently to do it. "Lord, I am vile." "I abhor myself." "Wo is me, for I am undone," &c.

2. *By exalting the divine perfections, and ever glorying in God.* God ought, and must have undivided glory. He will not that any should glory before him. By veneration—by reverence—by praise, we must extol the Lord God, &c. Now, this must be our walk. In secret and in public, the lower we descend in the valley of humility, the higher will be our station in glory.

APPLICATION.

If we would exemplify the text,

1. *The word of God must be our rule.*
2. *The spirit of God, our guide.* "He will lead," &c.
3. *The example of Christ, our model.*
4. *Prayer to God, our constant exercise.*

GODLY SUBMISSION.

"And Aaron held his peace."—Leviticus x. 3.

The ways of God must, of necessity, often be mysterious to us. They are so especially in reference to his own people. Aaron was one of God's distinguished servants. His sons, too, had been favored in beholding the divine glory, in company with Moses, their father, and the seventy elders of Israel. But, alas! they neglected the important sanctities of divine worship, and presumptuously offered strange fire on the altar of the Lord. For this, divine vengeance overtook them, and they were smitten with instant death. To be bereaved of a son, under ordinary circumstances, is a distressing bereavement; but to be bereft of two, suddenly, and by God's visitation of displeasure, is one of the greatest calamities to which a parent could be subjected. Yet, this was Aaron's trial; this cup of anguish he had to drink; and under this severe cross, it is said in the text, "Aaron held his peace." In other words, he bore his affliction with pious submission, as a man of God. Let us inquire,

I. What is involved in the spirit Aaron manifested.

II. The principles on which it can be vindicated.

III. The means by which it may be attained.

I. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE SPIRIT AARON MANIFESTED. We are not to suppose that it was the silence,

(1.) Of Stoicism. Doubtless he felt, and felt keenly.

(2.) Neither was it the silence of haughtiness; disdaining to quail before the Most High.

(3.) Nor yet the silence of melancholy, where the spirit was broken, and hope extinguished.

(4.) Nor yet the silence of terror, from an overwhelming sense of God's wrath. Aaron had seen striking exhibitions of these; but it was the silence,

1. *Of deep anguish.* Not the rolling, noisy brook of lamentation; but the deep stream of affliction, sinking into his heart, overwhelming his filial affections, and absorbing all his parental sensibilities. It was trouble words could not express, nor sighs, nor groans duly indicate.

2. *Of entire resignation to God's will.* He was dumb, and opened not his mouth, for God had done it; and he did not exalt his judgment against that of God, nor doubt the rectitude and wisdom of what the Lord had done. How entire was the resignation! it was unquestioning—unmurmuring. Nature was subordinated to grace, and the parent bowed before the admonitions of heaven. In this Aaron acted with more of the devoted submission of the child, than either Job, Elijah, Jeremiah, and many other of the celebrated saints of the Lord. Consider,

II. THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THIS SPIRIT CAN BE JUSTIFIED.

1. *On the ground of God's sovereignty.* Has he not a right to do as he deems fit with the workmanship of his hands? He is the potter, and we the clay. Does he not do according to his will among the armies of heaven? &c. "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive." "Behold, he taketh away, and who can hinder him?"

2. *On the ground of the divine righteousness.* He is righteous in all his ways; not only when he blesses, but when he corrects, or even punishes. He never errs, nor inflicts his wrath beyond the desert. He never acts from whim, nor caprice, nor passion, nor revenge. Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

3. *On the ground of the divine goodness.* God loves to exercise goodness—to bless—to make happy—and true it is, judgment is his strange work. Therefore, when he does so, it is for the maintenance of order and rule in his dominions; and the withholding of occasional displays of his terror would only tend to harden the wicked to the increase of daring sin, and thus the ultimate ruin of a greater number of his responsible creatures. All his dispensations are essentially good, and merciful as well as just. Observe,

III. THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS SPIRIT MAY BE ATTAINED.

1. *Let us contemplate the hopeless condition of fallen angels.* These have sinned, are ruined, and forever damned. How different is our condition! How merciful are the ways of God to men!

2. *Let us remember our guilt.* What is its amount? Who can number his sins? How repeated—aggravated! Each sin has deserved eternal death. All short of that, is grace, &c. No sinner, therefore, is punished beyond his desert. The trial may be keen, heavy, continued; but it is not hell, despair, everlasting wo.

3. *The number of the divine benefits.* How countless—how rich—how free; benefits of nature—of providence—especially of grace. The blessings, too, he has in reversion for the saints. Eternal life; everlasting glory. How few, comparatively, our sorrows and griefs!

4. *The connection between our severest trials, and best interests.* As trials are not contingent, so neither are they without design. Their end is our discipline in holiness, our improvement in divine things. They work for us. "All things work together," &c. Our crosses are blessings in disguise. They are to elicit latent feelings—to strengthen virtues—polish graces—loosen from earth—make us sick of sin—and raise our hearts and desires to the better land.

APPLICATION.

1. *Acquiescing silence honors God.* If we thus honor God, he will assist and comfort. He will lift up—heal—sustain, &c.

2. *Boisterous complainings only aggravate our sorrow.* These can do us no good; but they grieve the Holy Spirit. By these, we reflect on religion, &c.—injure our own souls.

3. *Prayer must ever accompany our resignation.* "Call upon me," &c. "Is any afflicted, let him pray," &c.

4. *All the dispensations of God will be fully vindicated in the judgment-day.* Then his ways and works will appear worthy of his unsullied purity, inflexible truth, and universal benevolence.

VIGILANCE AND SOBRIETY ENFORCED.

"But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."—1 PET. iv. 7.

VERY many of the moral evils of life arise from supposing eternal things to be very distant. This supposition leads to worldliness, to skepticism, to sloth, and indifference. Constant attention therefore to the brevity of life is incessantly urged both in the Old and New Testament scriptures. One very ancient prayer runs thus: "So teach us to number our days," &c. "Oh that they were wise," &c. David prayed, "Teach me how short my time is." Christ often urged this. "Be ye therefore ready." Paul exhorted that they would redeem the time, &c. James, "Boast not thyself," &c. Then our text, "The end of all things," &c.

I. THE SOLEMN DECLARATION.
II. THE ADMONITORY COUNSEL.

I. THE SOLEMN DECLARATION. "The end of all things," &c. It has been supposed that the apostle referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, which was so graphically drawn and predicted by the Redeemer. But it is rather to be supposed that he is referring to the great consummation of all things, especially connecting the text with the fifth verse. Nearly eighteen centuries have rolled round since then, and therefore you doubt the truth and force of the text. But what are 1800 years to eternity? "A thousand years with the Lord are but as one day," &c. But the force of the text will appear if you remember that death terminates our probation, and then judgment follows. Just as a man who falls asleep, and the hours of night only appear as a moment, when he awakes. So will it be even with Abel, the first who fell asleep, at the end of the world. Besides, at death we enter on our final state, which the judgment will only confirm and not alter. Then, really and truly as near as you are to death, are you near to the end of all the things of this world as they concern you; and who can say how near that is?

(1.) Look at the general definitions of human life—at its longest and best, but vanity. A vapor — a thing of naught. "Man that is born of a woman," &c. But a step between any man and death. Our cradles rock us to the tomb. Whoever we be, wheresoever we go, we are travelling to the tomb. Oh yes, as an arrow we are darting through this life, &c.

"Every beating pulse we tell,
Leaves but the number less."

(2.) Observe how this has been verified in the history of those around you. According to a careful computation, from fifty-six to sixty die every minute; 3,360 every hour; 80,640 per day; 564,000 per week; 2,257,000 per month; 29,433,000 per year. Thousands have died in this metropolis, many in this neighborhood—several from this congregation—many of you have lost friends and relatives.

(3.) Is it not reasonable then to suppose your end may be near? What have you which they had not? Youth? why one of our sabbath-school children has perished as the flower; strength? many possessed of manly vigor and mature strength; health? oh, how soon this withers; a cold—an accident—a breath of unwholesome air, and the system sickens, and the grave becomes our house; and when this period arrives, it is the end of this world to us. Its cares, and toils, and riches, and pleasures, and society. The sun shines, but we hail not its light—the wind blows, but we feel not the breeze. The seasons revolve, but we know it not. The noise of business and pleasure is as loud as ever, but we hear it not—the voice of mercy is proclaimed, and the songs of praise sung, and the cry of prayer presented, but we know it not. Now this period may be especially near to some now before God. Consider,

II. THE ADMONITORY COUNSEL. "Be sober, and watch unto prayer." Observe, the duties are,

1. *Sobriety.* Guard against excess, see Eph. v. 15, &c.; Observe also the words of the Redeemer, Luke xxi. 34. But this sobriety involves freedom from worldly intoxication — from vanity — frivolity, &c. "To be sober-minded," &c. To be found exercising Christian wisdom and prudence. "Brethren, the time is short, therefore," &c.

2. *Devotional vigilance.* I unite the

two, "Watch unto prayer," mere vigilance will not do, nor mere prayer, but both, and both united. So Christ also has wedded the two together. "Watch and pray," &c.

(1.) Watch against Satan, and pray that you may tread him under your feet.

(2.) Watch against the world, and pray that you may be kept from its influence and spirit.

(3.) Watch against your own hearts, and pray for the efficient aids of the Holy Ghost.

(4.) Watch against the seductions of time, and the concerns of this life, and pray for spiritual-mindedness, and a meetness for the realities of eternity.

APPLICATION.

1. To all both parts of the text are applicable. None are exempted from the first declaration, and therefore the latter part is peculiarly appropriate.

2. Let these truths be pondered by every one.

3. Act in reference to them.

FRAILTY AND SINFULNESS OF MAN.

"And we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."—ISAIAH lxiv. 6.

DAYS, and times, and seasons, are all instructors of mankind, if they will but hear and consider, and understand. "Day unto day uttereth speech, night," &c. The animal creation also instruct us, the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and the insect tribe; they all obey their respective instincts, and answer the end of their being. The four seasons of the year, are full of wisdom and admonition to the thoughtful observer. Spring is the emblem of youth with all its beautiful prospects and visions of hope. Summer is the emblem of maturity—of man in riper years—the season of activity and toil. Autumn is the emblem of old age, decrepitude, and affliction. And winter of mortality, when man goeth to his long home, &c. Our attention is called to one of the most striking evidences of autumn, the fading of the leaf. Let us consider,

1. SOME OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF WHICH THE TEXT IS CAPABLE. Let us look at the sublunary character of empires and nations. Taking a survey of the mighty empires of ancient times, whether the Egyptian, or Assyrian, or Chaldean, or the nation of the Jews, we might have reasoned and inferred as to their perpetual abiding, but they all had their rise, and glory, and decay, and most of them their utter ruin. Their chief capitals, where are they? Tyre, and Nineveh, and Babylon, where are they? Palaces razed—buildings levelled—the site of their former occupation disputed. Their glory passed away—Ichabod written on the countries of which they were the metropolis or chief cities. We see here on a large and mighty scale, the truth of the text. "We all do fade as a leaf." See it illustrated,

2. *In the history of families.* Look what havoc and change is observable in families. Go back to the first family; see the beloved and godly son a corpse. Look at the family of the friend of God, "Give me a burying-place," &c. Look at the prophet when the mandate is declared. "Son of man," &c. See the horrid slaughter of the infants of Galilee; and Rachel weeping, &c. The ruler's daughter is dead—the widow's son is borne on the bier to the place of sepulchres—Lazarus has been already interred. What in reference to our own family? Our devoted anxious parents where are they? The companions of our early years, where are many of these? What disruption, what invasion, by the relentless destroyer! No kindred tie can ward off—the most sacred are snapped asunder and destroyed. How true of families!

3. *Observe the personal illustration of the text.* The text equally applies to individuals; nations and families are of course composed of individuals. Now, what is our life, a vapor—a thing of naught. "Boast not thyself," &c. What have we that is secure, that fades not? Our possessions are uncertainty in the abstract. Our honors are a puff of breath. Our beauty or comeliness is a superficial tincture exhaled in a single hour. Our strength is lost by a few moments of pain. Our life is a span—our breath is in our nostrils, and we stand in jeopardy every hour. Consider also how true this is of all men. Speak we of the latitudes of the earth—the torrid and the frigid zones are alike here. City and village, savage or civilized. Wealth avails not—dignity avails not—power avails not—influence avails not—even knowledge avails not. Nay, godliness avails not in interrupting the victories of the king of ter

rors. The sentence is gone forth to every human being, "Dust thou art," &c. The decree is sealed and ratified. "Man that is born of woman," &c. Notice, too, how correctly the falling of the leaf portrays our mutability.

(1.) The falling leaf becomes disunited, and separates from the rest.

(2.) It descends from the branch, and is prostrate on the ground.

(3.) It withers and decays, and returns to its mother earth.

(4.) Some are blown off by the fierce wind and early blast. Others survive to the usual season, and some survive to the verge of winter. So exactly with life; the infant—the youth—the man—and the aged. But how true sooner or later of all! Observe,

II. The cause which the prophet assigns. "Our iniquities, like the wind," &c. Yes, sin has caused all the separations and disruptions of the universe. Angels from heaven—our first parents from Eden—mankind from God—man from man—body from soul. Sin is the womb of all diseases—the parent of the grave—the opener of hell—the curse of the world. Our iniquities. We need not blame our first parents. We have made iniquity our own; we have chosen it, adopted it—nourished it—and therefore "our iniquities, like the wind," &c. Then let us attempt an improvement of the subject.

1. *Let us wisely dwell and reflect on what is fading.* Inconsideration will not affect its truth. Ponder, consider, be familiar.

2. *Let us practically act in reference to these things.* Improve time, live usefully, seek the end of our existence and redemption.

3. *Seek an interest in those things which fade not, but are permanent and abiding.* The love and favor of God. The merits and grace of Christ. The influences of the Holy Spirit. A title, and meetness for heaven. Let me urge this on all, and every one. See that the evil is remedied in its source. Sins blotted out, and then we shall live in a better land, &c. Perpetual spring, &c.

EARTHLY VANITIES.

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher: vanity of vanities; all is vanity."—Ecclesiastes i. 2.

The life and history of Solomon are highly instructive, interesting, and admonitory. He rises in the horizon of dignity and greatness, as the sun in his glory; his splendid beams enlighten and enliven the pages of Jewish history; all seem to indicate abiding greatness and prosperity. But, alas! his sun becomes obscured; sins, like dark clouds, intervene; and his moral history for a length of time becomes afflictive, dreary, and distressing. At eventide, however, it is light. Before the ending of his day, the sun again breaks forth; and the serious lessons of this book give us every reason to hope, that his return and penitency before God were sincere, deep, and effectual. As a true convert from his worldly voluptuousness, and idolatrous pursuits, he records his experience, and places this sermon as a kind of pedestal, on which a beacon is to be reared, to warn all succeeding generations of the folly and misery of departing from the true living God. Our subject is the leading inscription or text of the whole discourse, "Vanity of vanities," &c. Our text is capable of great abuse and misrepresentation. It may be much distorted, and grievously misapplied. We shall, therefore,

I. Guard the subject from misappropriation.

II. Give it a rational and scriptural interpretation. And,

III. Labor to urge its true and just application.

I. Guard the subject from misappropriation.

1. *The subject is often misappropriated by the disbeliever.* I mean the skeptic—the rejecter of revelation. He contemplates all around him as the result of accident or chance. He recognises no inventive wisdom—no harmonious order—no controlling power—no intellectual design. Seated on the barren rock of infidelity; excluding Deity from his own creation, he exclaims, in the language of affected indifference, "Vanity of vanities," &c.

2. *The subject is misappropriated by the gay and superficial.* Persons who are truly the butterflies of creation, only they happen to have the form of intellectual and contemplative beings. For these there is no attraction, but in the gay scenes of dissipation. Frivolity is the atmosphere they breathe. Of science, truly so called—philosophy, worth the name—literature,

adapted to enlighten, they are totally ignorant. Speak to these of the solemn verities associated with man's responsibility, and they have no ear to hearken, or mind to observe. They imagine all things must partake of the frivolity of their own pursuits, and consider the text as the best excuse for negligence and irreligion.

3. *The text is misappropriated by the satiated sensualist.* Some give themselves up to work all kinds of voluptuous iniquity with greediness. Ignorant of the true design of animal enjoyments, they expect to live, be hale, and happy, in the hot-bed of putrefaction. At length the mind is overworked—the system shattered—the constitution broken—an immensity of material treasured up for bitter remorse, and protracted pain and horror—and the text becomes their constant exclamation, "Vanity of vanities," &c.

4. *The text is often misappropriated by the unfortunate and distressed.* Persons set out, calculating upon the certainty of pleasure and prosperity; they only dream of aerial castles standing firm and long. The cherished scheme being realized; the fair weather, blue skies, and enchanting scenery; health, friends, riches, enjoyments, are in the inventory of their good, as sure realities. At length come clouds, and storms, and tempests; one plan is wrecked upon another; their castles evaporate, their prospects are blighted, and they sit down cynical, morose, disappointed, and cry out, with impetuous and discontented spirit, "Vanity of vanities," &c. Now, it is not necessary that I expose the fallacy in each case I have presented to you. I presume the true state of the matter must be self-evident. Therefore, let us consider,

II. THE RATIONAL AND SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION OF THE TEXT. We premise, none of the divine works are vain; all He doth is wise, and good, and righteous. All the bounties of heaven are good, and not vain in themselves. This may be said of all that can contribute to the physical or mental enjoyment of man. Knowledge, wealth, society, music, when rightly applied, are not surely criminal. But the text is to be understood thus: that, as man's chief good and spiritual portion, the whole world, with all it presents, is "vanity of vanities." Now, the correctness of this will appear,

1. *If you consider their want of adaptation to man's true nature.* Material things may do for material creatures; earthly good for mere earthly natures; but that which is mental, must have a mental good—that which is moral, must have a moral good. Now, riches, honors, carnal enjoyments, might do, were man only material; had he no spirit, soul, conscience, &c. But to the mind they are chaff, and vanity, and wind; they cannot satisfy—they cannot fill, for they are not adapted; they are vanity, &c.

2. *If you consider their mutable uncertainty.* They are ill-adapted, but also insecure. "Riches make to themselves wings," &c. How strange, that man should passionately love and depend on a bird upon the wing! They are, indeed, uncertain riches. Honor is a bubble—a breath. Only five days intervened between the hosannas, and the cry of "Crucify him, crucify him." Cardinal Wolsey's bitter exclamation has been proved true in ten thousand instances. "Oh! that I had served my God as I have my king," &c. Pleasures are not ever fragrant; often they satiate, and then disgust. All these are flitting; inscriptions on the sand, &c. And what is life itself, that by which we hold the tenure of the whole? Man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity. Childhood, and youth, and manhood, all, all are vanity.

3. *They do not satisfy the desires, or improve the heart.* Who does not feel his accountability? Who can obliterate the claims of the divine governor, or utterly bury the admonitions of conscience? There is the bed of affliction—the hour of death—the day of judgment; these demand preparation—fitness. What worldly thing can prepare us for them? Say—is it wealth, titles, wine, festivities, or even general knowledge? Do they exalt, purify, control the life, assuage the passions, meet the desires, answer the hopes? Do they array in the robes of virgin purity for the coming of the Bridegroom? Do they adorn with the wedding-garment? Do they give a sure hope of a blessed immortality, fit us to die, commend to God, and meeten for glory? If they do not, then how true the text, "Vanity of vanities!" Is not the interpretation of the text true and just? Let us, then,

III. LABOR TO URGE A TRUE AND JUST APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT.

1. *Let all created good have its right and subordinate place in our estimation.* Food and raiment; wealth and reputation; the proper pleasures of life, &c. We demand no monastic seclusion—no corporeal tortures—no cynical life; but remember, these perish in the using. Call them by their right names; apply them to their proper end; be moderate in all things lawful; and avoid the very appearance of evil.

2. *Let it induce us to seek those which are truly precious and abiding.* Divine knowledge is not vain; divine riches are not, &c.; divine honors are not; divine pleasures are not. A good conscience—God's favor—God's love, &c.; all these are presented to us in Jesus Christ.

3. *Often contrast the vanity of this world, with the permanent glory of heaven.* There no changes distract—no tempests—no pain, nor sin, nor death, &c. Oh, seek it! set your affections upon it, &c. Confess that you are pilgrims, &c.

A PRAYER CONCERNING DEATH.

"Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am."—PSALM xxxix. 4.

THIS is one of David's more serious psalms. Generally, he tuned his harp to praise and adoration; but other subjects were sometimes allowed the precedency. In this psalm, he contemplates his mortality. As a traveller, he looks to the end of his journey; as a sailor, to the completion of his voyage; as a laborer, to the conclusion of the day, and the night of death. This is a subject which ought not to be forgotten. It may not be so agreeable as others, but it may be more useful. Thus thought Moses, when he prayed, "So teach us to number," &c., and the text. Observe,

I. DEATH, AS TO THIS WORLD, IS THE END OF ALL MEN. We say, as to this life; for, though a man dies, yet he shall live again. Death is not extinction—annihilation. It may be said, that the good man only then begins to live; but it is the *end* as to this world.

1. *It is the end of all our temporal concerns.* Look at the universal toil of human beings. Go to the *mine*, to the *field*, to the *sea*, to the *shop*, to the *furnace*, to the *laboratory*, to the *counting-room*, to the *study*, &c., all toil, and this, when not excessive, is advantageous to man. Religion says, a man may be diligent, &c.; but death is the end. The man's work may *live*, but the artificer, the author, must die. The building, the picture, the book, may remain, &c. Think of this—work for time—live for eternity.

2. *It is the end of our earthly relationships.* How endearing, and sweet, and precious are these! Look at that family—at that social circle—at that Christian church; but there is to be a dissolution of these. Parents die, children die, friends die, ministers and people all die. Now two duties. Let us value and love them, and do them good while we have them. Let us not forget their mortality, and idolize them.

3. *It is the end of our probation.* This is the solemn view. We are on trial; we have talents, blessings and opportunities; we are stationed here as candidates for eternity. But at death the probation ends; our talents, and time, and all must be accounted for. Then, we must account for our stewardship—the solemn reckoning, and the reward or punishment. Follow the reflection—I must give an account.

4. *It is the end of our exertions.* Then, we can do no more for our families, the church, or the world. Works of goodness, and devotion, and mercy end. In eternity, no ignorant children, no sick families, no intemperate victims to be reclaimed. As we can do no more for ourselves, neither for others. Reflect, "I must work while it is called day," &c.

II. THIS END WE ARE LIABLE TO FORGET. Hence the text, "Make me to know," &c.; that is, to remember, to consider, &c. We are liable to forget,

1. *Because the subject is not agreeable to flesh and blood.* Death itself is an evil; love of life implanted deeply; in most cases, it produces gloom, &c.

2. *Because other things absorb all.* The mind choked with cares, surfeited with pleasure, or occupied with trifles. Often all the time, all the faculties engaged in other things. Not one convenient season &c.

3. *Because Satan would have us forget it.* He always tries to blind men as to the future. He would have men ever think of

health and life, and the world. He keeps out of mind the coffin, the shroud, the grave, eternity. Who does not know the truth of this?

III. PRAYER TO GOD IN REFERENCE TO THIS END, IS HIGHLY IMPORTANT AND DESIRABLE. We have referred to the prayers of Moses, &c.

1. *By prayer to God the subject will be kept in mind.* We cannot pray about it, without this. Thus we shall think and consider, &c.

2. *Prayer to God will sanctify the subject to us.* God will teach us, &c.; and his teaching will influence our hearts, &c.

(1.) We shall be deeply impressed with our own frailty, and the uncertainty of life. Measure of our days short; handbreadth; as nothing; altogether vanity; as many entrances for death as we have pores in the body.

(2.) We shall prepare for it, by repentance for sin; by faith in Christ's death; by securing a title for the skies; by walking as strangers, &c.—pilgrims, &c.

(3.) We shall watch for it. "Be ye, therefore, ready," &c. "All the days of my appointed time," &c. Not forget it; but, like the mariner at the mast head, be looking out for the haven of rest, and the shores of bliss.

APPLICATION.

1. *Who does not need to pray thus?* Who has thought rightly, &c., enough on this subject?

2. *Is not the subject worthy the attention of all?* What! the young? How often the flower fades before the noon-day, &c. Man is as mortal at eighteen as four-score.

3. *Those who will not entertain the subject will die twice—yea, forever.*

4. *There is a world where such a prayer will be unnecessary—yea, improper.* No sickness, or death; in the heavenly Canaan, &c.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING AND THE HOUSE OF FEASTING CONTRASTED.

"It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting."—ECCLES. vii. 2.

WE will at once call your attention to the text. Let us,

I. VISIT THE HOUSE OF FEASTING, AND SEE WHAT MAY BE LEARNED THERE. And,

II. VISIT THE HOUSE OF MOURNING, AND ASCERTAIN THE TRUTH OF THE TEXT. That "it is better," &c.

I. WE WILL VISIT THE HOUSE OF FEASTING, AND SEE WHAT IS TO BE LEARNED THERE.

1. *The house of feasting must be described.* Solomon does not mean the house of revelry, scenes of excess, places of sinful pleasure; a wise or good man would never form such a contrast; but there are houses of feasting spoken of with divine approbation.

(1.) There were religious feasts; the feast of the tabernacle, the feast of the passover, the feast connected with the jubilee.

(2.) Feasts of social intercourse and hospitality. Lot made a feast in Sodom when the angels visited him; Abraham made a feast when Isaac was weaned; Isaac made a feast of reconciliation with Abimelech.

(3.) Feasts were spoken of with indirect approbation by Christ. "When thou makest a feast call the poor," &c., Luke xiv. 13.

(4.) The gospel provision is often likened to a feast. "A feast of fat things," &c Gospel supper.

(5.) Christ honored a feast with his divine presence, at the marriage at Cana in Galilee. There may be seasons therefore when feasts may be seasonable.

2. *Lessons of usefulness may be learned in the house of feasting.*

(1.) We may learn the goodness of God in the provisions of his bounty, and this should inspire gratitude. Every creature of God should be sanctified with thanksgiving.

(2.) We may learn the pleasurableness of the social principle. God has formed us for mutual enjoyment.

(3.) We may learn the joyous character of our religion; not designed to make us wretched, but happy. "Rejoice in the Lord always," &c. We remark,

3. *In going to the house of feasting some cautions are necessary.*

(1.) These visits should only be occasional, or we shall waste our time and means; also enervate both body and mind.

(2.) These visits should be regulated by moderation, even in the enjoyment of the good things of God. In eating, our moderation should be manifest, we should not pamper the flesh, &c.

(3.) These visits must be connected with watchfulness, there are many snares: to foolish talking and jesting, to lightness and frivolity, to vanity and display, to an undue mixture with unprofitable company. Under these restrictions and limitations we may visit the house of feasting. But let us,

II. VISIT THE HOUSE OF MOURNING, AND SEE THE TRUTH OF THE TEXT, THAT IT IS BETTER, AND THEREFORE SHOULD HAVE THE PREFERENCE. "It is better," &c. By the house of mourning is obviously meant the house of bereavement. Where death has invaded, and where the friends are met to attend to the funeral obsequies of the departed; whose house has not been at one time or another a house of mourning? Who has not lost a parent, a wife, a husband, child, brother, sister, or dearly loved friend? With many this has been frequently repeated. How often have we been called to visit the house of mourning! One and another have finished their journey before us, many have gone to their long home, and as mourners we have had to visit their bereaved dwellings. What is to be seen in the house of mourning? The fruit of sin, human nature in ruins, the body prostrate, loathsome, the spirit fled. What a change! I wonder a celebrated poet could ever have composed that hymn,

"Ah! lovely appearance of death," &c.

What is lovely? To whom? Yet it is good to visit the house of mourning, yea, better, &c. The house of mourning,

1. *Teaches us what we are slow and unwilling to learn elsewhere.*

(1.) Our own mortality. The "living know," &c., and yet act as if they did not. The subject does not impress as it ought, but in the house of mourning it comes home; here we have it in reality before our eyes.

(2.) Our own frailty. We think, though death may come, he is not near,—a great way off. This is one of Satan's delusions, but how often is it torn off in the house of mourning! not only the aged and infirm, but the young and strong.

(3.) The emptiness of earthly honors. What avail titles? honors, renown, talents, earning, &c.; write them on the coffin plate, engrave them on the marble tablet, &c. How futile, &c.

(4.) The vanity of all earthly things. Its wealth, its pleasures, music, revelry how empty, &c.

2. *In the house of mourning we see the necessity of brotherly affection and sympathy.* In the house of feasting each one seems happy, all appear independent, to have resources of joy in themselves. But how different in the house of mourning! Here we see our fellow-creatures bowed down, heavy laden, drenched in tears, and our sympathy is called out. We are to aid, to feel, to comfort, to weep, &c.; and it is well that we should do so. All this softens, subdues, hallows; it tends to tear up selfishness, and to infuse into the heart a spirit of love and generosity.

3. *In the house of mourning the blessings of the gospel are better prized.* "The full soul loatheth the honeycomb." The blessings of the gospel do not attract the gay and the joyous as they ought in the house of feasting. Created good seems then to be in the ascendant. How different when sorrowful and heavy laden; how different when the cistern is broken up, or holds no water; how different when we feel we are dying creatures in a dying world! Now light and peace are desired, now a refuge is precious, now the soul can retire and think and pray. How beautiful now will be the feet of those, &c. Many who in the day of prosperity were trifling and inconsiderate, in the day of adversity have considered. In their affliction they will seek me early.

4. *In the house of mourning we are brought to contemplate the future world.* We are brought to the margin of eternity; we follow our friends to the very verge, and there they leave us; we cannot go with them, but our thoughts do so—our feelings—our imaginations; we seem to come very near to it; to its gate, and we look through the lattice work; this is for our good. To be prepared for it; we must think upon it; have our thoughts and affections there; be citizens of it here, expectants here, have our conversation in it, &c. Without these we shall never possess it; in these respects how much better to go to the house of mourning, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let our subject lead to serious consideration.* To solemn reflection. Brethren, the time is short, &c. Let this be our

prayer, "So teach us to number our days," &c.

2. *Let it lead the Christian to greater spirituality and devotedness.* How diligent we should be; how earnest; how intense!

3. *Let it lead the unconverted to immediate decision.* "Awake, thou that sleepest," &c. "I beseech you by the mercies of God," &c. Let the solemnities of religion now impress, &c. Now decide, &c.

THE DECEASE OF THE PIOUS.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."—PSALM cxvi. 15.

THERE are four things which are closely and essentially connected with each other. Life and death, judgment and eternity. Every day of life is one towards death, and one nearer to that great day for which all others were made. Death, judgment, and eternity, will just bear an aspect according to our character and course of life. As is the way so will be the end. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope," &c. Our text relates,

I. TO AN IMPORTANT CHARACTER. The Lord's saints.

II. TO A SOLEMN EVENT. The death of the Lord's saints.

III. THE INTEREST THE DIVINE BEING TAKES IN THIS EVENT. "Precious," &c.

I. TO AN IMPORTANT CHARACTER. The Lord's saints. The term signifies *holy ones;* but in the original it signifies merciful ones. As mercy is one of the bright attributes of Jehovah, so it is one of the most illustrious graces in the Christian character. But the Lord's saints are distinguished,

1. *As renewed spiritual persons.* None such by nature or education. All men are far from God, &c. Naturally carnal—sold under sin. Aliens—far off, &c. Such must be renewed by the power of the gospel and the influences of the Holy Spirit, before they can become saints. By the Holy Spirit effectually working within them, they are made spiritual—new creatures in Christ Jesus.

2. *As righteous and holy persons.* He who is born of God doeth righteousness. Love to God and love to his commandments distinguish all saints. A righteous life is the only palpable and unquestionable evidence of the saint's true character. But besides righteousness, there will be a seeking after holiness, growing into the divine likeness—conforming to the divine image, &c. We observe,

3. *Saints are peculiar persons.* They differ from the mass. Do not go with the multitude, &c. Their speech betrayeth them. Their maxims, spirit, &c., are opposite to those of the world. Their pursuits and desires, &c., are all different to the world—they are saved out of it. They are pilgrims seeking a better country. Soldiers fighting with the powers of sin. Racers running for the celestial prize. Citizens of heaven, born from thence and thither bound. The text directs us,

II. TO A SOLEMN EVENT. Death of the saints.

1. *The most eminent of saints are liable to death.* No amount of piety, goodness, talents, or usefulness, will exempt. No discharge in this war, &c. The fathers, where are they; and the prophets, do they live forever?

2. *The death of saints is under the gracious control of the Lord.* The whole of a good man's life is so; all his hairs are numbered; all his steps, &c. How much more so his death! The time, place, manner, &c. The Lord guides through life, and also through the swellings of Jordan.

3. *The death of saints is often a present loss to the church on earth.* The church loses their presence, their prayers, influence, &c. But,

4. *The death of saints is their infinite advantage.* "To die is gain." "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," &c. The warfare is over—the race finished, &c. Now the sheaf is ripe—the likeness complete—the majority attained—the probation ended, and the perils over, forever and ever; now, holiness, intelligence, and bliss, are perfected; absent from sin, sorrow, and danger, and present with the Lord in the realms of purity, glory, and joy. Observe,

III. THE INTEREST THE LORD TAKES IN THIS EVENT. "Precious," &c.

1. *As such it is especially the subject of his gracious notice and regard.* He always beholds them with complacency and de-

ight, how much more now. He makes all the bed of his people; he gives light in darkness, &c. He sustains and blesses according to their need, &c.

2. *As such he bestows peculiarly precious blessings.* Often taking down the tabernacle gradually; often giving a rich experience; often in mellowing the atmosphere, and irradiating the whole of the horizon, removing every stormy cloud; restraining Satan, invigorating the graces, giving gleams of glory and draughts from the fountain-head of bliss. In one word, in giving dying grace.

3. *In enabling his dying saints to triumph in dissolution.* It was when dying, that Christ raised the shout of conquest. So Stephen—so Paul—so myriads. This is the Lord's doings, and thus religion, his saints, and especially his own blessed name, are honored and magnified.

APPLICATION.

1. *See the difference between the death of the righteous and of the wicked.* We see it represented in the contrasted scenes of Joseph's dream, where one was elevated to honor, and the other led forth to execution. In the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, and the overthrow of Pharaoh, &c.

2. *How different the supports of Deism and Christianity in a dying hour!* What can Deism do for its dying votaries? Oh, think and reflect.

3. *How different the results of irreligion and piety!* A life misspent, means neglected, soul lost, &c. In the other, the work finished, and the rewards of eternity in sight. Who then will be on the Lord's side? Young friends, delay not; oh, let this subject move you; let it allure you; now decide!

THE FAITHFUL SERVANT'S REWARD.

"His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord."—MATT. xxv. 23.

THE text is connected with the parable of the talents—a parable fraught with the most important instruction, and one which it is our true interest often to consult and study. In it we are taught our responsibility to God; that the demands of Jehovah will be in proportion to the talents given, and the means of improvement possessed; that a period will arrive when we must each render his individual account; and that God will reward every man according to the use he has made of the talents committed to his trust. Now, the subject presents to our view the result of the divine scrutiny. The servant's accounts are satisfactory, his privileges have been improved, and his master publicly attests it, saying, "Well done," &c. Observe the character, the commendation, and the reward.

I. NOTICE THE CHARACTER REFERRED TO. It is that of servant; a servant of God. Now, this can only be applied to the Christian; not to the unconverted sinner, nor to the formalist. Now, in being the servants of God it is implied,

1. *That the service of sin and Satan has been abandoned.* We cannot serve both. In our natural state we are the servants of sin. In repentance we forsake the works, &c., of the devil; we cease to be the slaves of iniquity; the yoke of sin is taken from the neck; and the fetters of our natural bondage are broken off. It implies,

2. *That Christ, and his service, have been cheerfully and solemnly assumed.* Christ invites the sinner to come to him; to yield himself to him; to present himself a living sacrifice, &c. Now, this has been done. The mind has assented; the heart has obeyed. By believing consecration, Christ and his claims have been conceded, and an entire surrender of the soul to him has been made. It implies,

3. *That Christ's authority and commands are fully recognised.* If I am a servant, then Christ is my master. His authority I must own—his laws I must obey. It must be my calling, the end of my life to serve him. I must seek to know his will, and walk in all his commandments. Such briefly is the character. Notice,

II. THE COMMENDATION GIVEN. "Well done, good and faithful," &c. Now, what are the essentials of good and faithful servitude? There must be,

1. *Diligence.* In opposition to negligence and indolence. An improvement of our time; a proper regard to duty; the laying out of our powers, &c. This is often inculcated, "Be diligent," &c. "Giv

ing all diligence," &c. The other servant was condemned for slothfulness, &c.

2. *Constancy.* In opposition to vacillation and change. The Christian recognises Christ as his master in all places and at all times. In public; in the domestic circle; in secret, &c. In all his ways he acknowledges, &c.

3. *Cheerfulness.* In opposition to constraint. Not from fear of death and hell, but from love. He is, indeed, constrained; but it is by love, "the love of Christ," &c. He delights to do the will of God; his heart is in it; he loves the master, and loves the service.

4. *Devoted fidelity and zeal.* In opposition to formality and unconcern. He feels the claims of God; he enters into them; he identifies them with his very life; he makes them his own; his first and best powers are yielded to God; Christ has the pre-eminence; the fire of zeal burns on the altar of his heart; he is as faithful even in small matters, as in great ones; he recognises the claims of Jesus to all he is, and to all he has—body, soul, and spirit—time and property.

5. *Perseverance to the end.* He is faithful, even unto death. He serves him in health and in sickness—in life, and to the hour of dissolution. Such is the commendation. Observe,

III. THE REWARD BESTOWED. "I will make thee ruler," &c. Now, this reward includes three things: Dignity, riches, and felicity. It is a reward of,

1. *Dignity.* "I will make thee ruler," &c. Now, this is the general doctrine of revelation, that the saints of God shall be exalted and dignified. God will glorify them before assembled worlds; He will own and confess them. They shall have dominion, be exalted to the station of the angels, and they shall be kings and priests unto God and the Lamb forever. They shall be exalted to thrones, bear victorious palms, and upon their heads shall be crowns of glory that fade not away. A reward of,

2. *Riches.* The riches of grace are now their portion—then the unsearchable riches of eternal life. They are heirs of God, and God shall be their unfailing and everlasting portion. Adversity and want shall be removed forever; have unbounded celestial treasures, and blessings everlasting. It is a reward,

3. *Of felicity.* "Joy of thy Lord." Now, they have the joys of the Holy Spirit; but this they receive in streams from above. Have it by measure; but there they enter into the joy—bathe in the ocean. Now, they have rays of joy, &c., there, they are surrounded by the meridian splendor of eternal noon. Now, this joy of the saints will,

(1.) Be proportionate; not all alike. One, two cities; another, five, &c. There are clearly degrees of future glory, "As one star differeth," &c. Three things will bear on the saint's future glory:—

Holiness. Which expands the mind, and gives it greater capability of enjoyment.

Usefulness. "They that turn many to righteousness," &c. And,

Sufferings. "Our light afflictions, &c., work out," &c. "Whoso forsaketh," &c.

(2.) It will be perfect. No mixture—no alloy—no intermission. All sources of sorrow left behind.

(3.) It will be boundless, both in measure and duration. Fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

(4.) It will be the joy of our Lord. Of his *obtaining;* of his *bestowing;* the *same* with his joy, John xvii. 22. "He that overcometh," &c. If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him; in the enjoyment of him forever and ever. Such will be the faithful servant's reward.

APPLICATION.

1. *Are we the characters?* The servants of Christ.

2. *Are we living and aspiring after the commendation of "good and faithful servants?"* Are we diligent? constantly zealous? &c. Or, are we indolent? selfish? &c.

3. *How miserable will be the unfaithful servant's eternal destiny!*

4. *Let the devoted servants of Christ anticipate the reward.* Now, you are the happy people; but the fulness of the blessing is to come—the glory is yet to be revealed. Let it incite your feelings and powers; let it enliven your hope; let it cheer your souls:—

> "The thoughts of such amazing bliss,
> Should constant joys create."

5. *Who will be the servants of the Lord?* Who is willing, &c.

IMPORTANT INTERROGATIONS.

"What, then, shall I do, when God riseth up? And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?" —Job xxxi. 14.

Job—the speaker in the text—is averring his integrity, in reference to his own servants, verse 13. A conscientious man will be considerate of those who depend upon him; yea, a merciful man regardeth the life of his beast. But, we select the words of the text as referring to a crisis which will be peculiarly solemn and important to every one of us; that period, when God will rise up and exact from every one an account of his stewardship. There is a passage quite parallel in signification to the text, Luke xiii. 24, &c. I ask, do any present dispute whether God will judge men or not? if so, revelation must be rejected. This is often propounded for our serious consideration. It is the doctrine of the Old Testament, reiterated by the Saviour, made known by the apostles, and is one of the concluding visions of the Apocalypse. Is it not in perfect harmony, too, with reason, that man should be rewarded or punished according to his works? Admitting, therefore, these essential principles, we ask, what shall we do? Let us take the latter clause of the text first. When God riseth up in judgment,

I. What will you answer? We put it to the two great divisions of mankind.

1. *We ask you, who are unconcerned and indifferent to religion?* We may assume, that God will require answers to such questions as these:—How have you lived? What end has your life answered? How have you employed your talents, opportunities, privileges? &c. What is your present state? &c. What plea for your guilty condition?

(1.) *Will you plead your uncertainty as to the nature of true religion?* That you had not demonstration as to the will and claims of God. Not sure as to the truth of the Bible, &c. May not God reply, How did you believe so many things on much slighter evidence? History, biography, &c. Did you carefully, solemnly weigh the evidences, take pains to be right? &c. Did you let conscience throw her influence into the right scale? &c. Did you ascertain how the Bible produced such mighty effects? Could not doubt God's exceeding goodness. Why not love, praise, and worship him? Is it not plain that you cannot answer?

(2.) *Will you plead necessity, or circumstances, as the causes of your condition?* Perhaps you say that you had a depraved heart; peculiar conformation of mind; extremely ensnaring circumstances and temptations. Now, all this may be true; but, if you were a judge in a human court, would you take these pleas from a robber, or an assassin? Besides, God would reply and say, it is not your depravity, but the rejection of the remedy; not your guilt, but refusal of the pardon; not circumstances and snares, but despising my Spirit and grace. What then can you answer, when he visiteth?

(3.) *Will you exhibit your excellencies to counterbalance your sins?* A good man to your species; that is, distinguished for humanity—a patriot—lover of your kind—a devoted parent, &c. Two objections to this:—

1. You never designed to serve God in all this. God not in all your thoughts. It was agreeable to your ideas and feelings.

2. You had your reward. Humanity rewards its possessor. Patriotism obtained your own approbation, and that of others. Domestic kindness was returned by the happiness it effected. You did not these things to the Lord, but to yourself, and you had the reward; but God you neglected—despised.

(4.) *Will you refer to your purposes and resolutions?* But then they have all been violated. Better not to vow, than to do so, and not to pay them. You had time; perhaps many years. Means of grace in abundance; numberless opportunities. A day was given—calls and invitations sent—providences to move you—events all preaching to you. Had you not a reasonable amount of time? How many had not so much? Enough for every thing but religion, the soul, and eternity. What will you answer?

2. *But we turn to the righteous.* What will you answer? No merit, or righteousness. Will you not refer to the mercy of God—to the sacrifice of Christ—to the plenitude of the gospel—to the efficacy of the Spirit? Give all the glory to God. Not worthy of the least of thy mercies. Worthy is the Lamb.

"'Tis just the sentence should take place;
'Tis just; but, oh! thy Son hath died."

We turn now to the second question.

II. What will you do? I ask this of

the unconverted—the unprepared, for the righteous will welcome Christ; shout, All nail! Hosanna!

1. *Will you flee?* But how, or where? God is omniscient and omnipresent. Cannot conceal, evade, or go beyond his reach and control. All will obey the trumpet's blast; the sea—hades, &c.

2. *Will you resist?* Angelic hosts, one of whom slew thousands in a night. Resist the almighty power of God! the moth could better resist the strength of man! resist the lightning — the desolating whirlwind! resist the ocean's roaring tempest! resist the earthquake—the pestilence!

3. *Will you seek the aid of your fellow-sinners?* They will be in the like condemnation; equally powerless—despairing—lost! Now combination—multitudes, avail not.

4. *Will you appeal to the happy, the redeemed?* Benevolence will surely be perpetuated in heaven. But if the God of benevolence can punish, then the most merciful will exclaim, "Just and righteous art thou," &c. Will they demur? Oh, no! They will solemnly respond, "So let all the enemies of God perish."

5. *Will you throw yourselves on the divine clemency?* The reign of grace is over—the dispensation of clemency ended. Look at the sceptre—it is pure justice; no longer pity, &c.

6. *Will you fly to the cross?* Judea—Calvary, have all passed away. No; the Lamb is no longer held up for contrition's gaze. The trumpet no longer sounds; Christ is now judge; the cross now glitters, as if with fiery indignation to the rejectors—to the unbelievers, &c. Hope and mercy are clean gone forever. What will you do? Lie down in darkness; be cast out, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *But what will you do?* Avert it now—prepare now—pray now—fear now—repent now—believe now—obtain a hope and title now.

2. *Who will this day?* Who among you young—you aged?

FUTURE PUNISHMENTS.

"Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell."—Luke xii. 5.

Our subject is replete with that which is truly solemn, awful, and momentous; yet it is one of those topics which evidently come within the proper sphere of ministerial duty; it is a part of the counsel of God. The great apostle said, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." Before entering, however, immediately on the discussion of the subject, a few prefatory observations may be necessary, perhaps essential.

(1.) That the great and blessed God has a right to make laws for the government of his intelligent creatures.

(2.) That these laws may justly be connected with rewards to the obedient, and with punishment to the disobedient.

(3.) That in the present life it is evident men are not punished and rewarded according to their moral character and doings.

(4.) That there must be therefore another world where the guilty will be punished, and the righteous rewarded.

(5.) That if men are not punished or rewarded in a future state, then the administrations of God are not equitable and just.

(6.) That the scriptures, however, do most clearly and fully reveal such rewards and punishments in the world to come.

(7.) That we can know nothing with certainty on this subject, except what is contained in the word of God.

(8.) Then the word of God only must be our guide and oracle on the fearful subject to which your attention is now invited. Our subject embraces two leading points.

I. Why there is a hell, &c. But a word or two as to the signification of the term. In scripture, the word does not always mean a state of punishment, but occasionally the grave, and the unseen world, Acts ii. 31; but in most passages it distinctly points to a place of future punishment. Let the following suffice:—"The wicked shall be turned into hell,"&c. "And in hell he lifted up," &c. Now there are three reasons why there should be a hell:—

The first respects Deity. He is a holy being; he cannot behold iniquity with allowance. Is it reasonable that his enemies should dwell in his sight—share his palace — mingle with his holy hosts? Think of vile, polluted, malevolent spirits, hating God and holiness, and say if it is not necessary that they should have a world to themselves, and dwell in a state of exilation from God.

Our second reason respects holy beings. There are angels—holy beings—glorified saints. Are these to bear the society of the vile and wicked? If so, the next world, to the righteous, would be vastly worse than this. Now, the godly can retire to their closets, &c.; to the house of God, &c.

Our third reason respects the wicked themselves. Is it not meet and righteous that they should be in a state of restraint, and not allowed to wage eternal war and rebellion against God and his holy government? These reasons will all be illustrated, if we look at our prisons. Who will deny that such places are necessary? Of what avail would be our laws? We say, the honor of the king, and the majesty of his government, require a prison for the lawless and the vile. We say, it is necessary for the safety and welfare of the community at large, or else neither property nor life would be secure. Who would wish to live in society where the most vicious and cruel of mankind range abroad at pleasure? &c. Therefore, that the power of evil may be restrained, the laws regarded, and the rights of the community respected, the prison is necessary. Equally so, and for the same reasons, hell. The honor of Jehovah, the justice of the divine government, the well-being of the righteous, and the restraint of the vile, all demand that there should be a hell. Let us now,

II. CONSIDER THE SCRIPTURAL ACCOUNT OF IT. It is obvious, that some of the descriptions of the Bible are figurative. "Lake of fire." "Lake that burneth with fire and brimstone;" "where the worm dieth not," &c. I know some have contended for the literal existence of the fire and the worm; but we conceive there are insurmountable objections to those opinions. Among the revealed representations of hell, we have,

1. *The nature of the place affirmed.* It is a prison—a place of confinement into which all the rebellious and unholy are to be thrust. As such, it is stated that it was originally intended for the devil and his angels, Matt. xxv. 41. Men, by uniting with the devil in sin, become his companions, and sharers of the hell prepared for him and his angels. This prison is one of darkness—outer darkness—the darkness of death, &c.

2. *The nature of the misery is also revealed.* It is represented as being extreme—absolute—unmitigated; as horrible as the burning of the flesh with fire—yea, with fire and brimstone. It is described as producing weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. It is represented as a state of utter torment, "I am tormented in this flame." Lost spirits are delivered to the tormentors.

3. *The sources of their misery are also revealed.* The misery of hell will arise,

(1.) From the loss of all enjoyment. There will be no peace, no joy, no happiness for the lost. Not one instant's cessation of horror and wo; not one bright interval; not one cheering moment. The wretched in this life are sometimes cheered by the visits and sympathies of friendship; but the lost will never enjoy that—by the intervention of sleep; but the eye of the lost will never be closed in sleep. All sources of enjoyment and happiness will have fled forever, &c.

(2.) From the infliction of the divine wrath; a sense of God's displeasure; his just and righteous indignation, Psalm xi. 6. "Upon the wicked," &c.

(3.) Earnest and unallayed desires. The representation given of hell in the parable of the rich man; he saw Lazarus afar off. It is highly probable that the lost will see the bright and joyous scenes of heaven—hear their songs—behold their triumph—see the oceans of pleasure. Oh! how they will long to enjoy them! But the desire even for a drop of water will be absolutely refused. Then, too, these wicked desires will remain in all their unsubdued force. The miser seeking gold—the sensualist pleasure—the drunkard his cup. But now they have the burning, feverish desires, but no means of realization.

(4.) From remorse of conscience. Sin will now be seen in all its blackness; seen in the light of the flames of perdition. How, then, will the lost curse themselves! Look at Esau, crying with many prayers for his birthright; but he had sold it—it was gone forever. Now the sinner will see the infatuation of his course. To sell the soul, and heaven, and eternal salvation, for the bubbles of time—for a title—for show, pomp, &c.—an hour's mirth, &c. Every recollection will produce remorse—excite horror. Wealth prostituted; health and strength spent in toiling the way to ruin; talents perverted; pious parents and friends;

but now the gulf between. Bible—but it was neglected; sabbaths wiled away, and gospel mercies not improved; conscience drowned, stupified, &c.; Christ and his cross, &c., despised.

(5.) From the companions of their misery. In hell will be all the vile of the universe, hateful and haters of one another. All the black, debased spirits, that ever cursed the world, with all their propensities and crimes. Think upon them; think of being shut up with fifty of the vilest assassins; but here will be all who ever lived and died in sin, besides the devil and his angels, for whom hell was originally prepared.

(6.) From a sense of settled and eternal despair. For the misery of the lost will endure forever; despair of relief will be the bitterest ingredient in their cup. But many dispute the eternity of the future punishment of the lost. Revelation is explicit.

1. The same words were employed to describe both the one and the other—both heaven and hell. "These," says Christ, "shall go away into everlasting," &c. Again, "where the worm dieth not," &c. The smoke of their torment ascendeth forever and ever.

2. We remark, there is no proof that the punishment will in the least purify the wicked; and if they remain eternally unholy, they will eternally be fit only for hell.

3. God's mercy is pleaded; but we never read of any exercise of it towards the lost, or those of any world but this. Besides, have not fallen angels as much hope on this ground as lost sinners?

4. Here we see the necessity of imprisoning some for life—so long as they live in this world; and this is just and wise. Why not so then in Deity, with respect to the next life? The word of God gives no hope for the lost. How, then, must they feel the pressure of eternal despair! an eternal night; an eternal ocean of waves of sorrow; eternal pain and anguish.

APPLICATION.

1. *We warn all of you against this hell of misery and endless wo.* Oh! flee from it.

2. *A way of escape is opened in the gospel.* You need not one perish. It is the will of God, your salvation, &c.

3. *Deceive not yourselves by forming false ideas of a future state.* Even exclusion from heaven is enough; or by its duration, a thousand years of agony—ever that, sufficient to deter.

4. *Let the Christian rejoice, and bless God, who has delivered him from the wrath to come.*

THE UNAVAILING LAMENTATION.

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."—JEREMIAH viii. 20.

I SHALL not dwell on the literal application of the text to the distressed and despairing condition of the Jews, to whom it refers, but give it a personal and spiritual bearing on the eternal interests of your soul's salvation; and in doing so, shall particularly dwell on the following propositions.

I. THAT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU THE GRACIOUS SEASONS OF SUMMER AND HARVEST.

II. THAT THESE MAY PASS AWAY UNIMPROVED.

III. THAT THE REGRETS OF SUCH WILL BE AWFUL AND OVERWHELMING.

I. THAT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU THE GRACIOUS SEASONS OF SUMMER AND HARVEST. Summer is the season of opportunity for laboring. Harvest, of plenty for gathering; these are the working and gathering seasons God has given you.

1. *The gracious season of summer.*

(1.) The summer of life; preceded by the spring of childhood. We consider the summer of life to begin with that period when we clearly see and discern between good and evil; much earlier in some than others; now this summer is of diversified length; some of you have had ten, twenty, thirty, forty years of this summer season; some have only a very limited and evanescent summer.

(2.) The summer of reason; thus man is distinguished from the brute beast. He is distinguished for reflection; he can survey, take a retrospect, look on the boundless future; he should be wise, &c.

(3.) The summer of opportunities. To gain knowledge—to receive holy impressions,—to prepare for death—to be meet for eternity.

2. *The gracious season of harvest.* Season of abundant blessings.

(1.) Harvest of knowledge; if ignorant

.t is wilful. The light of the gospel shines; .he word of God is possessed; the voice of instruction crieth; the means of improvement provided.

(2.) Harvest of privileges. Sabbaths; sermons; means of grace, &c. How these crowd our years, and months, and weeks; scarcely a day when we might not enjoy and benefit by these.

(3.) Harvest of blessings. The tidings of the gospel, the provisions of mercy in Christ, pardon, acceptance, the prayers of the pious; the Holy Spirit; eternal life, &c. But these seasons,

II. MAY PASS AWAY UNIMPROVED. It was so with the antediluvians; with the inhabitants of Jerusalem; with thousands of others; with myriads in our day, around our doors. Was so with many of you for years; it is so now, we fear, with many present; this will be fearfully exhibited at the last day; then they will cry to the rocks and the hills, &c.; but can we account for it?

1. *Many do not think.* "The ox knoweth its owner," &c. His gross, stupid apathy and indifference; eat and drink, and toil, but never consider either their present state, or future destiny.

2. *They will not forsake their sins.* They love to do evil, it has become their habit. They roll the pleasures of sense &c., under their tongues as a sweet morsel; held fast in Satan's bonds; not convicted, not sorry, not anxious.

3. *They will not believe.* Do not hear as they ought; forget, &c. Do not believe the threats, nor the promises; in sin's hatefulness, and hell's terrors; in God's love, and heaven's glories. Unbelief hardens the heart, blinds the eyes.

4. *They will procrastinate.* Defer the most important concerns, year after year, season after season; from youth to maturity; from maturity to old age; old age to death.

III. THE REGRETS OF SUCH WILL BE AWFUL AND OVERWHELMING.

1. *Sometimes their regrets are expressed in this world.* On the bed of languishing, on the approach of death; often heard it; occasionally persons die in a state of apathy, but often awake just to see the precipice, &c.

2. *They will surely be uttered in eternity.* How fearful the contrast, no light, no probation, no blessings, no means, no ray of hope! These regrets will,

(1.) Be the regrets of intense agony. "I am tormented," &c. Agony of recollection; agony of seeing heaven in the distance, agony of self-condemnation.

(2.) Regrets will be unavailing; no space for repentance, no ear for prayer, no fountain, no cross, &c.

(3.) Of black despair. The billows of the ocean rolling in all the fearful raging foam of endlessness. No sound heard, but the wailings of fellow kindred spirits damned, &c., and the terrific exclamations, "Who can dwell in endless fire?" "Who can endure everlasting burning?" &c. "The harvest is passed," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. None would choose this portion.
2. Who would risk it?
3. Who will flee from it? Now is the summer, now is the harvest, &c. Oh! I would call, and urge, and invite, &c.

THE TERROR OF THE LORD, A GROUND FOR MINISTERIAL PERSUASION.

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."—2 COR. v. 11.

THE apostle refers, in the verse before the text, to the solemnities of the judgment day, the judgment seat, the judge, the appearance of every man, and the destinies of each and all. What an awful subject! How solemn and momentous! Now the object of the Christian ministry is to impress these scenes on the minds of men, that holy fear may be produced, and a change of life adopted. Hence he says, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord," &c. Consider,

I. THE TERRORS OF THE LORD AS REVEALED TO US.

II. THE INFLUENCE THIS PRODUCES ON THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

I. THE TERRORS OF THE LORD, &c. Now by the terrors of the Lord we understand the exhibition of the justice of God, in the trial of his probationary creatures at the last day.

1. *The day is spoken of as terrible.* "The great day of his wrath," &c. Doom's-day, the day to which all other days now have reference; the day uniting time and eternity; a day often spoken of in the holy

scriptures; the day of God, that great and terrible day.

2. *The appearance of the Judge will be terrible.* Arrayed in all the infinite grandeur of his perfections, "Behold he cometh," &c. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flames of fire," &c.

3. *The solemnities of the day are terrible.* The erection of the great white throne, the sound of the trumpet's blast, the opening of the graves, the sea giving up its dead, the heavens wrapped together as a scroll, the earth reeling as a drunken man, the sun black as sackcloth, the moon red as blood, the globe experiencing all the throes of dissolution, time ready to expire, the heavens and the earth passing away. Then the universal convocation. All the generations, and tribes, and individuals of mankind, before the eternal tribunal; the opening of the books, the public declaration of every man's sins, the sentence of eternal death, &c. How fearful will be that awful hour! Then shall they cry to the rocks and to the mountains, &c., shall seek annihilation, &c., but the officers of divine vengeance shall bind them hand and foot, &c.

4. *The terrors of the infliction of wrath which shall endure for ever.* Think of the wondrous devouring fire, everlasting burnings, the abiding tempest, the unending storm, the bottomless pit, whence ascendeth the smoke of the torments of the lost forever and ever. Now these terrors are revealed to us; these are the truths of this book. They are just, the holiness of God demands them, conscience attests this. They are certain, God cannot change, &c. We have had some presages of them in the judgments of God on the old word, Sodom, &c.

II. THE INFLUENCE A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TERRORS OF THE LORD PRODUCES ON THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER. "We persuade men."

1. *To hear what God has spoken.* Hear the word of the Lord.

2. *To consider and reflect on these things.* Is it not wise and reasonable?

3. *To believe the declarations of the divine word.* To receive them as truth.

4. *To prepare for this great and terrible day.* Sin invests that day with all its horrors. Then it must be forgiven, forsaken.

(1.) *The Judge must become our friend.* He desires and seeks this.

(2.) *We must give ourselves to his cause and people, and honor him in the world.* The saints will not only escape, but be openly justified, confessed, exalted, crowned, and glorified. Oh, then,

1. We would *persuade,* because you are reasonable beings.

2. We persuade *each,* as it is a personal concern.

3. *All,* as there is a way of escape for every one.

4. *Now,* because this is the accepted time, &c.

ON CARING FOR OTHERS.

"Am I my brother's keeper?"—GENESIS iv. 9

OUR text was the language of the fratricide of Cain, the first human murderer, the murderer of his brother. God was now holding inquisition for blood. He is in the presence of his Maker and his Judge. A question is proposed as to his knowledge of his brother Abel; to which, in the language of heartlessness, he replies by the interrogatory of the text, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Who can read it without being shocked at the monstrous indifference it evinced? You all stand aghast from such selfish isolation, and Cain is condemned in the court of your consciences. But if Cain was wrong, he was so in principle as well as in expression; and if Cain was wrong, so are all who possess the same spirit, though not extended to the same degree of indifference. We affirm, that every man is bound to feel and care for his fellow-man; and to a certain extent, every man is his brother's keeper. We will consider,

I. SOME CASES WHERE IT IS INVARIABLY CONCEDED THAT WE OUGHT TO CARE AND FEEL FOR OTHERS. Now this is admitted,

1. *In reference to parents and children.* How weak, helpless, and dependent, are children! Uncared for, they must perish. A mother's love and attention to her infant child, ever form a subject for the illustration of the tenderest passions of the heart. A father is expected to toil for their subsistence; to pity, to protect, to watch over, &c. And Christianity demands, that parents should train them up in God's fear, labor for their spiritual welfare.

2. *In reference to relatives and friends.* Brethren and sisters are supposed, by their identity of interests, to feel and care for each other. Hence, a brother's neglect

and indifference are justly branded as unnatural. So also when persons are bound in the bonds of mutual regard, connected with the true spirit of friendship. How Jonathan cared for David, &c.

3. *In reference to pastors and flocks.* Here especial affection and regard are properly expected; here love and diligent care are to be evinced. As the shepherd cares for and watches his flock, so the Christian shepherd is to care and watch for souls. How was this exhibited in Paul! how faithful, how tender, how devoted! and this is to be reciprocated. "Brethren, pray for us." "May the Lord have mercy on the house of Onesiphorus," &c. Now these are instances universally allowed. Let us now consider,

II. THE LEGITIMATE EXTENT TO WHICH THIS PRINCIPLE SHOULD BE CARRIED.

1. *Should we not care for our neighbors?* Those at our doors; where we are located together. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," &c. In this way all who compose our families, servants, &c., who work in our shops, &c., those whom we see daily.

2. *Should we not care for our country?* Love of country, or patriotism, has ever been held a distinguished virtue. Desire its freedom, its prosperity, its intellectual elevation, its moral well-being: our fatherland, the country of our ancestors, of our birth, &c.

3. *Should we not care for the suffering?* The poor, fatherless, orphans, widows, the afflicted, &c. We do violence to our nature if we do not compassionate these; humanity demands this. I advance one step beyond.

4. *I ask, should we not care for the world?* This is philanthropy; love to our species everywhere, and a desire to bless our race. All other limits are too contracted; the true circle of goodness is the world; every man of every clime, &c., especially those needing my compassion, requiring my help. If such a one dwell in the sterile frigid regions of Greenland, or in the burning torrid zone, if he cry for my help, I must not ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" I am bound to care for his bodily weal, I am bound to care for his mental state, for his condition as a man, and a citizen of the world; as an immortal being, accountable with myself to God, &c. My care must be affectionate, sincere, self-denying, &c. Indifference is criminality, neglect is sin, &c. I notice,

III. THE GRAND CONSIDERATIONS WHICH SHOULD LEAD TO THIS AFFECTIONATE REGARD.

1. *The oneness of our nature.* "God hath made of one blood," &c.; no alien blood, no captive blood, no ignoble blood, &c. I see in Adam and Eve the original parents of us all; I see an identity enlinking the whole together; I assail my own nature if I inquire, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

2. *We are all dependent on the same Providence.* Whatever is the color, the station, or the class, all hang on God's beneficent care; he gave being to the whole, cares for the whole, gives his sun to shine, &c., his air, his rain, his benefits, &c. Oh yes! in one grand sense they may all kneel and say, "Our Father!"

3. *We are exposed to the same perils.* Perils of adversity, perils of sickness, perils of bereavements, perils of sin, perils of Satan, perils of death; all equally sojourners in the world, all mariners on life's stormy sea, all hastening to the same home of dust, all destined to the same solemn, boundless eternity. I trample on these ties if I inquire, "Am I my brother's," &c.

4. *We are interested in one common redemption.* I delight in that truth of the gospel, "God so loved the world," &c. "He is the propitiation," &c. I would not monopolize the light, the air, the stream, but much less the Redeemer's grace; "Christ by the grace of God," &c. Then by that one precious Saviour, that one great sacrifice, one universal gospel, I cannot disregard one immortal spirit of any country or condition; I insult my Saviour, I trample on the gospel, if I inquire, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

5. *We shall stand before one final tribunal at the last day.*

APPLICATION.

Our text should lead us,

1. *To lay the axe at the root of selfishness,—self-ease,—self-care.*

2. *Let the spirit we have recommended be universally cherished, and we hasten on the jubilee of the world.*

3. *By this we test our true character.*

THE SABBATH.

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."—ISAIAH lviii. 13, 14.

THE subject of the sanctification of the sabbath has, of late, extensively engaged the attention of the disciples of Christ. Many persons have professed to doubt the divine obligation of Christians to it; they say, it was only binding upon the Jews under an inferior dispensation. Now to this subject let us direct our attention for a few moments. The sabbath was instituted during man's innocency in Eden; afterwards it was placed in the moral code of the ten commandments; it was associated with the most blessed promises, and its violation with the most terrible threatenings. Its repeal is never hinted at. It is said expressly, "The sabbath was made for man." Not for the Jew or the Gentile, but for the species, for all mankind, even to the end of the world. Now Christ being Lord of all, was Lord of the sabbath. It is clear, that after his resurrection he assembled with his disciples on the first day of the week, and it is absolutely certain, that the apostles and primitive Christians did the same, and have done so through every age to the present time. We fear, then, that all disputes on this subject have arisen more from the heart than the head; and, on the ground of the divine word, we call upon all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, to remember his sabbath, to keep it holy. Listen, then, to the beautiful statements of the evangelical prophet. Observe,

I. THE THINGS WHICH THE TEXT PROHIBITS. We are,

1. *Not to do our own ways.* That is, not to attend to our own lawful concerns; not to buy or to sell; not to work or employ others, except in case of evident necessity and mercy, see Exod. xx. 8, &c. How criminal are those masters and mistresses who forget the spiritual concerns of their servants on this day!

2. *We are not to seek our own pleasure.* It is not to be a day of worldly recreation; amusements, innocent on other days, are criminal on this: all pleasure-trips, and journeys, and parties, are equally unlawful; so also all reading of a mere entertaining description.

3. *We are not to engage in worldly conversation,*—"Nor speaking," &c.; foolish jestings are never seasonable, but conversation about trade, and commerce, and science; conversation about news, politics, &c., are all unprofitable and improper on this day. We see then the extent of the prohibition; it includes actions, feelings, and conversation. Observe,

II. WHAT IS ENJOINED.

1. *We are to call the sabbath a delight.* To look upon it as such; to reckon it not a toil, and not so much a duty and a load as a delight, a privilege, a blessing. Now if we feel and call it so,

(1.) We shall *hail* its approach.

"Welcome, sweet day of rest
That saw the Lord arise,
Welcome to this reviving breast
And these rejoicing eyes."

(2.) We shall *enjoy its exercises;* we shall feel it to be a day of freedom, of holy pleasure, and enjoyment.

(3.) We shall *reflect* upon it with delight; recall its scenes, revive its events meditate upon its services, &c.

2. *We must esteem it the holy of the Lord.* The Lord's day; his holy or sacred day; hence we shall labor to spend it in a *holy manner*, not negatively, merely avoiding sin, but earnestly seeking holy *influences* and blessings. The reading will be holy, conversation, meditation, songs, praying, &c. Thus we shall labor to keep the sabbath day.

3. *We must call it honorable.* The day God has honored, Christ has honored, saints of old, apostles, and confessors; and the day the great church of Christ honors: the soul's chief day, day for spiritual things, the sabbath, which is typical of the heavenly rest. God honors it with special promises, &c. Now, if we honor it, it will not be the shortest day; it cannot be spent in trifling; we shall give it fully to God and divine things; we shall labor to exalt God and to extend his glory; to imitate God, and do good to our fellow-men.

III. THE MOTIVES BY WHICH IT IS ENFORCED. We shall have,

1. *The enjoyment of God.* God will give us real satisfaction and abiding delight; God will be the portion of the soul, the joy and the life of the soul. Now is it pos-

sible for the soul to enjoy God without we honor his sabbath? &c. Think of the smile of God, and the light of his countenance.

2. *God will greatly dignify and exalt us.* "I will cause thee to ride," &c., see chap. xxxiii. 18; Deut. xxxii. 13, "Him that honoreth," &c.

3. *He will give us a rich and satisfying portion.* "Feed thee," &c., with all the blessings of the covenant. Now this is included in one promise, "I will be thy God." All will follow this; this includes both temporal and spiritual blessings; all for time and eternity. All this is ratified by the solemn word of the unchangeable Jehovah, who hath spoken it.

APPLICATION.

1. Let me press this subject upon the solemn attention of the professors of religion; they must make a stand against sabbath profanation; their principles require it, their comfort and usefulness. Be careful in small matters, consider all connected with you; think of the glory of the Saviour, the purity of the church; think of the holy sabbath.

2. Let me entreat sabbath profaners to turn to God; you must displease God, you must be under condemnation, you cannot enjoy religion, you cannot be fit for heaven, your bodies will fare better, your minds, your souls, &c.

3. Let us all improve our sabbaths as they pass along; every one bears its report to the Judge of all; every one will do us good, or render our account more awful. Thousands are now having their last one "Oh that they were wise," &c.

THE UNION OF PERSONAL AND FAMILY RELIGION.

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."—Joshua xxiv. 15.

How striking the scenes to which this portion of the word of God introduces us. Joshua, the faithful servant of God, who had been the unswerving professor and worshipper of Jehovah during a protracted life, and now mellowed by holy influences, ready for the enjoyment of the blissful reward, ere he gives up his office, and lays down his life, assembles the Israelitish tribes at Shechem, reiterates the goodness of God to them as a people, and urges upon them, in a most earnest manner, the fear and service of the Lord. He appeals to their judgments in this matter, and reminds them that God's service must be voluntary, exhorting them to choose whom they would serve. He then appeals to his own resolution, whatever course others might adopt; he says, "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord." We observe,

I. That true religion consists in serving the Lord. This service implies,

1. *A knowledge of his character and will.* This must precede every other department of God's service. To know God, as revealed in his word; to know his will concerning his creatures.

2. *A right state of heart towards God.* This is not natural to man. Men are at enmity with God—do not love or approve of God—therefore are not disposed to serve him. An entire change of heart is essential; the carnal principle must be slain; a spirit of love and delight imparted; this takes place in regeneration.

3. *A constant waiting upon God.* To learn his mind; to know his designs concerning us; to hear his commands; to be counselled by him.

4. *Sincere obedience to God's authority.* Keeping his statutes from the heart, and walking in his ordinances, &c., to do them. Having his law in our heart, and exemplifying it in our conversation and life. Thus we must personally serve God.

II. That personal religion must form the basis of the relative service of God.

1. *This alone will enable persons rightly to understand relative religion.* How can they instruct, direct, counsel their families, unless they know and serve God themselves? Besides, example is equally essential with religious authority and precept.

2. *This alone will ensure the divine approbation.* God will not be pleased with mere forms of piety, or the externals of worship. There must be the entire consecration of the heart to the Lord. God will bestow his blessing, and cause his smile to rest, where there is the true exemplification of his Holy Spirit and word.

III That relative religion should ever accompany the personal enjoyment of it. Here all religious heads of fami-

lies should feel, and resolve, and act as Joshua.

1. *Where there is true personal piety, there will be the faithful discharge of relative duties.* There will be an eye towards God's authority in all the stations we occupy, whether conjugal, parental, fraternal, or filial. Piety will show itself in the adornments of all the relative spheres in which Providence may place us.

2. *Where there is personal piety, there will be a deep solicitude for the spiritual welfare of our families.* How can it be otherwise? Shall we not value their souls, and hence seek their spiritual well-being? We shall not only desire their present temporal happiness, but their present eternal salvation. Our love is singularly defective if it does not include this.

3. *Where there is personal piety, there will be the means of family religion.* The word of God will be read—family prayer presented—family praises offered—and a family standard of piety maintained.

4. *Where there is personal piety, there will be earnest efforts made to promote family religion.* Family worship, &c., will be followed; serious counsel—affectionate entreaty—scriptural discipline—and fervent private prayer. We shall labor to enlighten the mind, to incite desires after holiness, and thus win them to Christ.

IV. THAT FAMILY RELIGION MAY BE URGED BY A VARIETY OF SOLEMN CONSIDERATIONS.

1. *From the family idolatry of pagans.* If there is family idolatry, surely there should be family religion.

2. *From the family wickedness of sinners.* Families unite to sin against God—to live in vanity—in religious negligence—in dissipation—in worldliness—and sometimes in avowed skepticism. How, then, should Christian families be devoted to the service of God, and the interests of religion.

3. *From the influence of families on churches.* All the active members of Christian churches are mortal. The fathers are going the way of all flesh. Where shall we look but to the families of Christians for the pastors, and teachers, and deacons of the next generation?

4. *From the happy family influence religion exerts.* It irradiates—humanizes; produces peace, comfort, and holy harmony. It is a type of the heavenly state.

APPLICATION.

1. *This subject is especially adapted to Christian heads of families.* To you it particularly belongs. Sincerely consider it, and examine yourselves by it.

2. *In the families of the wicked abideth the displeasure of God.* Let such be warned, &c.

PREJUDICE, AND ITS ANTIDOTE.

"And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see."—JOHN i. 46.

OUR text contains an interrogation and an answer. Both the question and the reply were from good men. Nathanael, a stern, devotional Jew—Philip, a sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. But Nathanael was under the influence of a very common, yet pernicious evil; he was the victim of prejudice. Philip, full of love and joy in having found Christ and meeting with Nathanael, exclaimed, "We have found him of whom," &c., verse 45. Now, when Nazareth was mentioned, Nathanael said, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" If it had been Rome, or especially Jerusalem, without examination the tidings would have been hailed; but a small, insignificant place like Nazareth, brought out the latent weakness of Nathanael, and hence the exclamation of the text. Philip treated the prejudice of Nathanael most properly. He invited investigation, "Come and see." Our subject, therefore, is prejudice, and its antidote. Let us notice,

I. SOME OF THE PREJUDICES MEN FORM IN RESPECT OF RELIGION. And consider,

II. CANDID INVESTIGATION AS THE ONLY ANTIDOTE.

I. SOME OF THE PREJUDICES MEN FORM AGAINST RELIGION. Prejudice is prejudging, or concluding on any subject, without previous examination. In looking at some instances of its manifestation, we may notice,

1. *The prejudices of skeptical minds against the Christian religion.* In many instances disbelief arises from depravity of heart; but there may be doubts entertained by men who may honestly seek the truth. These doubts respect,

(1.) The necessity of revealed religion.

They say reason is sufficient, as enlightened and guided by the works of nature; but if so, why have not some of the most profound students of nature found out the Supreme Good, and the way of holiness? If 4000 years had passed over before the dawn of Christianity, had not the world been fairly tried? Plato and Socrates had propounded their schemes of philosophy five hundred years before Christ; Seneca was cotemporary with Christ; Solon, the illustrious Grecian sage, lived nearly six hundred years before Christ; these had all exerted their talents and influence, and, so far as morals, and purity, and goodness are concerned, in vain. The great themes of religion are guessed at; they were wandering to seek abodes of pleasure with feeble tapers, surrounded by palpable darkness. Their glimmering rays of reason only made the darkness more visible, and confusion more confounded.

(2.) The prejudices of skeptics also regard the mysteries of revelation. They find heights they cannot reach—depths they cannot fathom — comprehensive subjects they cannot grasp, and hence they reject revelation; but is it otherwise with nature? Look at *that* volume. The geologist knows a little—the astronomer a little—the chemist a little—the mineralogist a little—and the zoologist; but what do they all know together? Why, scarcely the first elements. Even their most profound professors will confess this. Why, therefore, is it strange that the great and marvellous should extend to the Bible? If it had been otherwise, they would have said, it cannot be God's book; it is not great, and grand, and sublime enough. But it is with the Bible as with nature; light—air—bread —water—all abound, all are accessible; so the privileges and blessings of Christianity are all clear and simple, so that "a wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein."

(3.) The prejudices of skeptics have extended also to the enjoyments of experimental religion. They consider Christian experience as fanaticism, the result of a diseased or fanciful imagination; they treat it as monomania, and generally connect it with mental imbecility. Surely this is quite prejudging the case. A little reflection would cause them to reason thus: The number of those who experience the joys of religion is very great; myriads of testimonies; the various classes of persons; rich and poor—wise and ignorant—learned and illiterate; persons of all ages and countries; persons who had no object to serve, &c.; persons for many years together; persons in the article of death, &c.

2. *Let us advert to the prejudices of the formal against spiritual religion.* Many admire religion, as far as attending church and chapel; a form; going through the routine of duties and ceremonies; but all else they call cant, fanaticism, or hypocrisy. Now surely religion, if real, must be internal. Should it not be ardent and sincere? should it not be precise, and strikingly rigid?

3. *There are the prejudices of one class and section of Christians against others.* Many are so prejudiced that they see nothing excellent out of the pale of their own sect. Roman Catholics unchristianize all Protestants; the English church does the same with all Dissenters; Dissenters often do the same with one another. This spirit has produced intolerance, envy, hatred, persecution, and death. The inquisition, the star chamber, the ecclesiastical courts, are all the offspring of this prejudice. Why can we not distinguish between men and opinions? Who can doubt the piety of such men as Fenelon, Massillon, and thousands of others of the papal community? The most rigid dissenter must think of such men as Bishop Hall, and Archbishop Leighton, and Tillotson, and Barrow, and many others, with delight. Where is there a sect but has had its ornaments, and noble, and pious-minded advocates and friends? We should hate error—have fixed principles—hold fast every grace of truth—but yield to all and every sect credit for the excellencies they may embody, or the truths they may hold. Can we at all account for the existence of prejudice? It is not always a low, illiterate thing. We find it beneath crowns, and in communion with mitres, and learning, and talents, and even piety. We may, notwithstanding, attribute prejudice,

(1.) *Often to ignorance.* That is, of the subject, person, or thing in question.

(2.) *To education.* Taught certain principles; imbued with certain predilections.

(3.) *To pride.* We esteem ourselves, and our opinions, more highly than others.

(4.) *To the influence of our reading, and friends.* Consult only, or at least general

ly, authors and friends who are of our views, &c.

(5.) *To indolent rashness.* Want of diligent examination; precipitancy in decision. Notice some of the evils of prejudice:

1. It is a mental and moral evil.
2. It is an injury to our fellow-creatures.
3. It is an impediment to improvement.
4. It is grievous to God. We ask,

II. WHAT IS THE GREAT REMEDY FOR PREJUDICES AGAINST RELIGION? "Philip said, Come and see." Investigate for yourselves; judge from minute observation. Sometimes there is only one step from prejudice to credulity, i. e. from one evil to another. We remark,

1. *That a fair and candid examination of the scriptures, in most cases will produce conviction as to their divinity.* Sir W. Jones, Lord Lyttleton, Soame Jennings, Hon. Robert Boyle, and hundreds of others, have thus emerged from infidel darkness into the light of gospel day.

2. *A candid examination of the subject of the supreme importance of religion, will lead to the conviction of the great necessity for spiritual and internal piety.*

3. *A candid examination into the excellencies and good of other sects, will lead to the abandonment of sectarian bigotry and hatred.* We shall exercise forbearance—admire the good, &c. We say to all who ask, "Can any good?" &c. "Come and see"—Nazareth, and its great prophet—yea more, &c. See him in the synagogue; see him going forth to work miracles of mercy, &c. Observe him establishing the new dispensation of grace and salvation; opening the gates of paradise to an exiled world; breaking down all national and sectarian barriers; inviting all to be happy; dying to redeem every soul of man. Behold him, despisers! Behold him, ye bigoted Jews! Behold him, ye Gentiles! Sit a his feet; drink the streams of knowledge; obey his commands; be imbued with his spirit; and then reply to the question, "Can any good?" &c.

JOSIAH—A SERMON TO THE YOUNG.

"For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father."—2 CHRON. xxxiv. 3.

IT is very profitable to listen to wise proverbs and maxims; to hear the counsels of the wise and good; and it should be the study of the young to grow in knowledge and wisdom; but it is still more instructive to observe the personal excellencies of those around us. To see the precepts of the wise, speaking and living in the conduct of the good and pious. Now to this our text calls the attention of the young people present. It refers to Josiah, one of the kings of Judah, and relates, not what he said, but what he did, and what is worthy of your attention and imitation. "While he was yet young," &c. Observe,

I. THE BLESSED BEING REFERRED TO. "The God of David." David was not Josiah's immediate father, but was his predecessor, just as Abraham was the father or predecessor of the Jewish nation. Three hundred and seventy-four years intervened between the death of David and the reign of Josiah; but there are several things worthy of notice in this appellation. "The God of David."

1. *The God who so distinguished and exalted David.* Who found him a ruddy youthful shepherd, and gave him courage and might to slay the vaunting Goliath—who led him through the perils of Saul's court, up to the throne of Israel. Surely promotion cometh neither from the east nor the west, but from the Lord.

2. *The God who was David's portion and joy.* God loved David, and proclaimed him a man after his own heart, and how David exulted and delighted to commune with him and to bless him, of whom he exclaimed, "Whom have I in heaven but thee," &c. "O Lord, thou art my God!" &c.

3. *The God whom David served and celebrated.* He delighted in his law, walked in his statutes, loved his commandments, both privately and publicly sought to exalt God. Died in the enjoyment of the divine favor, &c. The true God of Israel was David's God, and this God was the object of Josiah's pious solicitude.

II. THE COURSE JOSIAH ADOPTED. He sought God. It is said, "he began to seek after God." Now, this supposes,

1. *That he felt his need of God.* Men naturally live without God, disregard him, neglect his laws, &c. Far from him by wicked works; what is worse, most are satisfied with this, do not seek after God

But Josiah felt his need of God, doubtless felt his sin, his misery, his helplessness without God. Man was not only formed by God, but for him. He is the centre of felicity and blessedness.

2. *That his soul desired God.* As his portion, Saviour, and friend. However rich, we are poor without God. However imaginarily excellent, yet miserable. However surrounded by acquaintance, yet friendless. Now these desires are likened to the feelings of hunger and thirst, like the desire of the tempest-tost mariner for the light of the morning.

3. *That he employed suitable means to find God.* By perusing God's word, for here God is to be found. By worshipping with his people, for here God has engaged to be present. By fervent secret prayer, for to such the Lord is graciously near. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, &c. Now, doubtless Josiah sought God,

(1.) Earnestly, with all his heart. The promise is to such.

(2.) Humbly, prostrated before God. In sackcloth and ashes.

(3.) With perseverance, urging his suit, pressing his plea, &c.

(4.) Through the promised Messiah. For the pious Jews had reference to the predicted Saviour in their worship and services; now just so must you seek God if you desire sincerely to find him.

4. *Josiah found God, obtained his favor, and lived in his service.* He was successful, he obtained mercy, God loved him, and he loved God. He reformed the manners of the people; put down idolatry, &c., ver. 3 to 7. So that his religion was personal, sincere, and public; it was real, practical, manifest. Now I would,

III. PRESS THE EXAMPLE OF JOSIAH UPON YOUR IMMEDIATE IMITATION. Now, my dear young friends, is it not worth your while to do as Josiah did? Do you not admire his character and conduct? But perhaps you say,

1. *That you are too young.* Not to know good from evil—not to be wise and happy—not to die and be lost forever; besides, Josiah was only sixteen years of age. A time the most critical, often thoughtless. Thousands have begun to serve God as early as your age. Or you object,

2. *My parents are irreligious.* Their example must be bad, &c. Much to be regretted, &c. But Josiah's father was one of the worst of men, read chap. xxxiii 21, &c. Religion is a personal thing. Or you say,

3. *I am unfavorably situated for religion.* The family, or shop, &c., quite irreligious, they would laugh or jeer, &c. But think of Josiah's difficulties; a complete idolatrous nation, yet he faced the whole, and was religious and good when the multitude were vile; but you say he was a king, then the greater danger, and more were the snares and temptations; or probably you object,

4. *I fear I should not hold out.* With that you have nothing at present to do. You must first begin; but Josiah held out, see chap. xxxvi. 25. God is sufficient for your preservation, &c. He has engaged to keep and sustain you. Thousands began early and held out. John Wesley, Dr. Watts, Whitfield, Doddridge, Matthew Henry, &c., &c. Myriads more. It is more likely that you will hold out if you do begin early. Habits of piety formed, &c. God honored, &c. Now in conclusion, let me urge your immediate seeking of the Lord.

1. *On the ground of your dignity.* It will adorn, be a crown of glory, &c. Elevate the mind, &c. May exalt you even in this life. On the ground,

2. *Of your happiness.* "Her ways are ways of pleasantness," &c. "Happy art thou, O Israel."

3. *On the ground of safety.* Then all will be right. Prepared for all events, ready for life or death.

4. *The miseries avoided.* Sin disgraces, often destroys health, &c. Makes bitter work for after repentance. Urge, exhort, direct.

INSTANT DECISION URGED.

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve."—JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

JOSHUA was an eminent Old Testament saint, the devoted coadjutor of Moses, and afterwards his faithful successor. He survived Moses twenty-four years; but now his course is finished; he has lived a hundred and ten years; he is ripe for the heavenly garner; he has only to deliver his last dying counsel and then enter upon his reward. He calls for an interesting as-

sembly, verse 1. He recapitulates the events of their history,—he urges personal piety,—avers his own resolution,—refers the matter to their free determination, and calls for their decision. How interesting! How affecting must have been the scene! Let us make it our own, it equally belongs to us. The text clearly contains the following propositions.

I. That true religion consists in serving God.

II. That man is responsible for that service.

III. That God demands decision as to this service. And,

IV. That to-day is the best season for concluding on this service.

I. That true religion consists in serving the Lord. We do not by this exclude knowledge, conviction, repentance, faith, &c., but these have essentially to do with our entrance on the divine service. Thus David exhorted Solomon to serve him with a perfect heart, &c. "This is the whole duty of man, to fear God and keep his commandments." Paul says, "I serve God with my spirit in the gospel of his Son." "The blood of Christ shall purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God," &c. "I beseech you, brethren," &c. Now this service includes,

1. *The worship of God.* To bless—adore—praise and extol the Lord. To give him homage, reverence, and thanksgiving.

2. *It includes obedience to his ordinances.* "To walk in his ordinances to do them." To regard with serious attention all the institutions of the gospel. Thus the first church continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine, &c. It includes,

3. *Practical regard for his moral laws.* These respect God, mankind, and ourselves. To love him, &c. Our neighbor, &c. To devote our souls and spirits to glorify him. The exercise of faith—patience—humility, and self-denial, is of course a portion of the divine service. His word contains the rules by which our conduct, words, and spirit, are to be ordered. The poet sings,

> "Teach me to walk in thy commands,
> 'Tis a delightful road;
> Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,
> Offend against my God."

II. Man is pesponsible for this service. God never coerces men into it. Will not have the service of constraint. The material part of the universe obey him of necessity. He gives them laws, &c. But man is rational, intelligent, and free. God will only have the cheerful service of the heart. What more clear than the text? "Choose ye." Here are two courses—two ways—God and idols, &c.; God and sin; God and the world; God and self; God and Satan. God calls on man to decide and act. Now man surely can do this; if not, he is not free; if not, he is not responsible. Let us ascertain this from other portions of scripture. See the case of Cain, Gen. iv. 7. Moses and the Israelites, Deut. xxx. 19. So to the Jews, God said, "Turn ye, turn ye," &c. So Christ invited and exhorted, and said, "Ye will not come," &c. "O that thou in this thy day," &c. These passages clearly urge this doctrine on our consciences. If you say that though you may determine yet you have not power to act, forget not that God will give his Spirit to them who ask him, and that if you seek, and knock, and ask, the promises of grace and mercy are full, explicit, and direct Reject this doctrine, and you are compelled to admit that of fatal necessity, which turns all men into mere machines, and takes the possibility both of virtue and vice out of the world. But every one of us must give an account of himself to God. This responsibility,

1. *Is personal.* For ourselves only. We cannot be so for any other absolutely; yet there is relative responsibility; as to the duties of life, &c.

2. *It is universal.* All persons of sane mind; young and old—rich and poor—every soul now present before God. We remark,

III. God demands decision as to this service. "Choose ye." To decide,

1. *Is our duty.* God calls us to it. He demands it. He will not allow compromise.

2. *This decision is possible.* Not out of your power. Not impossible.

3. *This decision always precedes a religious course.* This is the turning point. Look at the prodigal, "I will arise," &c. Look at Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The three thousand on the day of Pentecost. So in all who are converted.

IV. To-day is the best season for

CONCLUDING AS TO THIS SERVICE. "This day."

1. *This day is given us by God for this purpose.* He says, "Now is the accepted time," &c. "To-day," &c.

2. *No other period so adapted.* Distance is widening,—impediments increasing,—difficulties growing,—opportunities wasting. Now God invites—heaven smiles—Jesus beseeches—ministers entreat—the Spirit waits and hovers over your souls—angels attend, &c.

3. *This may probably be the only season.* How many have been ruined by to-morrow! An hour's delay has sometimes brought destruction. "Choose ye this day," &c. O yes, *this* day.

APPLICATION.

1. *Who will respond to the text?* See verse 16, 21. Do you say so? In your hearts—earnestly—humbly—prayerfully?

2. *What will you do if you refuse?* What service? What master? What reward?

EVIL COMPANY PROHIBITED.

"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."—EXODUS xxiii. 2.

NOTHING is more evident than that evil is in the world—moral evil—sin. How it originated in the universe is a matter which has greatly perplexed the wisest of mankind. It is one of the secret things, &c. How it was introduced into this world is specifically detailed; the agent—the temptation—the disastrous effects are all very minutely related. Evil is not only in the world, but has spread over its entire surface, and polluted all its inhabitants. To guard us against one of the most fatal sources of its pestiferous effects is the design of the important counsel of our text, "Thou shalt not," &c. Observe,

I. WE HAVE A FEARFUL TRUTH IMPLIED. "The multitude do evil;" that is, the great majority of mankind live in the practice of evil—are transgressing the laws of the Most High God.

1. *Let us substantiate this.* Sacred history attests it, see the condemnation of the old world, Genesis vi. 5 and 6. Only eight persons living in the fear and service of God. Afterwards the nations of the earth walked in the vanity of their darkened minds. Only the Jews had the knowledge and worship of the true God; of them the majority were Israelites only in name. How fearful the state of the world at the advent of the Saviour—the true religion corrupted, and the world lying in the hands of the wicked one. This darkness was partially removed during the first centuries of the Christian era; but afterwards even the Christian system became corrupted, aggrandized with worldly pomp, and then sunk extensively into forms and ceremonies. How melancholy the state of the world at the reformation! How extensively it is so yet; the multitude of nations are yet pagans, and Mahommedans, or savage. Multitudes of persons even of Christian countries are unconverted. The multitude even of our congregations are yet strangers to spiritual religion. Multitudes of all ranks and degrees, of the rich and of the poor, of the learned, of the illiterate, of the young, and of the aged.

2. *Let us account for it.* We do this by referring,

(1.) To the indwelling of evil in the human mind. This is its natural state; to this it is prone; here its feelings, and desires, and actions, are at home. The fountain being corrupt, the streams are necessarily so. The tree being bad, the fruit is such. The soul being depraved, the life is naturally wicked.

(2.) We account for it on the ground of Satanic influence. Men by nature are under his power—his vassals; his influence is exerted therefore within them; he leads them in the way of evil.

(3.) On the ground of human example; children, so soon as they can think or act, have evil placed before them—often neglected—brought up in ignorance and sin.

(4.) On the ground of the sacrifices religion demands; strait is the gate, narrow the way. There is the yoke of obedience, the cross of self-denial, the life of mortification, the crucifying of the flesh—all must be left if Christ be followed.

II. WE HAVE A LAMENTABLE TRUTH SUPPOSED. That men are liable to be influenced by the multitude. This, in some measure, arises from the constitution of human nature. In some persons this tendency is very powerful.

1. *Persons generally act by impulse rather than judgment*—and thus follow the multitude to do evil.

2. *Most persons look up to others,* and are influenced by their actions. The rich are thus, &c., by the poor; the learned by the ignorant; servants observe and imitate their masters and mistresses; children their parents, &c. Friends one another.

3. *To forsake the multitude requires moral resolution and fortitude.* Men are not willing to risk the approbation of those around. Thus it has ever been that men are greatly influenced in their conduct by the multitude. When the people cried Hosanna, the multitude united, and when the priests said, Crucify him, the people cried, "Away with him, his blood be upon us," &c.

III. WE HAVE IMPORTANT COUNSEL GIVEN. "Thou shalt not," &c.

1. *It is irrational.* Carry this out, and in heathen lands you would worship stocks and stones. In uncivilized regions be wild, and devourers of each other. Reason demands reflection—enforces consideration, &c.

2. *It is unscriptural.* God, in every age, and under every dispensation, has demanded the opposite. This distinguished Noah, Abraham, the prophets, the apostles, and the pious in all periods and countries of the world. To follow the multitude is to disobey God—to be the vassals of Satan, and to travel in the dark path of guilt and wo.

3. *It is unsafe.* All evil doers will perish. The wages of sin is death to each and all its servants—broad way, and its crowd of travellers are united to death, even eternal death. A multitude of evil doers cannot avert God's wrath, cannot mitigate each other's misery, and cannot escape everlasting torments—however numerous, each must die alone, and each appear for himself before the judgment seat of Christ, and each hear and bear his own inevitable doom.

IV. THAT SINNERS MAY DESIST FROM THIS COURSE, AMPLE FACILITIES ARE GIVEN.

1. *The right and good way is clearly revealed.* "Thus saith the Lord, Stand in the way and see," &c. Christ announced the narrow way, the way of holiness and salvation. It is a plain path, so that the wayfaring man need not err therein.

2. *Holy examples are placed before us.* "Be followers of those who through faith and patience," &c. Abel, Enoch, Noah, David, Daniel, and the apostles, especially the bright example of Jesus.

3. *Divine grace is promised.* Grace to save from sin, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord," &c. Grace to resist evil—grace to persevere, &c.

4. *The most momentous motives are presented.* Present peace and happiness—joy in death—eternal glory.

APPLICATION.

1. To whom is the text applicable especially?

2. Who have obeyed its wise counsels?

3. Who will do so this day?

AGAINST PROFANITY.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain."—EXOD. xx. 7.

OUR text is one of the commandments given with such solemnity by Jehovah to Moses on Sinai. It is a commandment often referred to in other parts of the sacred writings as one part of the moral code. It is one of universal and everlasting obligation. God addresses it to all his intellectual creatures, and its violation is an act of guilt, that will assuredly involve the delinquent in the displeasure of God. Let us therefore consider,

I. HOW THIS COMMANDMENT IS VIOLATED.

II. THE REASONS BY WHICH OBEDIENCE TO IT MAY BE URGED.

I. HOW THIS COMMANDMENT IS VIOLATED.

1. *By heinous acts of perjury.* Calling on God, or appealing to his name for the confirmation of a lie. This is a flagrant act of infamy, and which is justly punishable by the statutes of the land. Often have the guilty been screened, and often have the innocent been ruined, by this kind of perjury. Common lying is generally the precursor to false swearing.

2. *By calling upon God's name to curse ourselves or others.* Imprecations and curses are the most awful instances of profanity. How frequently do we hear men using language of the most profligate character, and associating the name of God with woes of the most horrible description!

3. *All light and irreverent uses of the name of God.* How many well-meaning persons err in this way, and sometimes

Christians interlard the name of God with trifling or worldly converse, who appeal to God on trivial occasions—who talk about God without serious or reverent reflection! We almost fear to illustrate this, yet it ought to be clearly understood. "God knows." "By the help of God." "As sure as God's in heaven." "God help you." "God bless you;" are the usual expressions in the mouths of the most wicked in this great city. How common is this sin! In all its characteristics; among nearly all classes. It is one of our national vices. How God's people should lay it to heart!

II. THE REASONS BY WHICH OBEDIENCE TO THIS COMMAND MAY BE URGED.

1. *It is solemnly forbidden in the text.* Therefore it is clear and binding in its authority. No reader therefore of the Bible can plead ignorance as an excuse for profanity. That law which was given under circumstances of such unparalleled sublimity, says, "Thou shalt not take," &c. Jesus showed the importance of this command by presenting it as the first petition in his divine prayer. "Hallowed be thy name."

2. *Profane swearing strikes at the root of all reverence for religion.* How can God be esteemed, and adored, and venerated, if men use his name profanely? There can be no fear of God—no deprecation of his wrath—no awe of his majesty—no regard to his authority. An irreligious state of heart must be the result; pious feeling, a spirit of devotion, or true seriousness cannot exist with profaneness.

3. *It is a sin extremely unnatural.* We can account for many evidences of depravity. We can understand how men may be gay, or sensual, or worldly, or angry, or even revengeful. May account for almost every sin, however vile and awful; but for profanity, no reason can be assigned. It does not gratify any passion—it does not obtain any enjoyment—it does not procure any advantage—it does not advance its votary to any glory. It is a superfluity of sin. A causeless, stupid, senseless crime against God, even the true and blessed God.

4. *It is a sin that greatly corrupts society.* A spirit of reverence for God, recommends religion. It must tell on society. Its influence will be seen and felt. It will check vice and keep in certain bounds glaring impiety. But profanity curses society, it blights every lovely thing, it is fearful in its effects on the young, who soon catch the spirit, and imitate what they hear. I add also, it is as indecent as it is vile. An insult to every educated and right-principled member of society.

5. *It is a sin that will fearfully harden the heart.* Hence how common for this class of persons to associate profanity with serious and affecting things! Men have been known to do this in sickness, in pain, when undergoing operations. Soldiers in the field of battle; sailors at sea; persons even in the struggles of death. I believe there is no vice which so excludes all excellency, and opens the flood-gates to all vileness and hardness of heart.

6. *It has often procured the signal wrath of God.* "Because of swearing the land mourneth." To blaspheme God's name was a capital offence under the law, Levit. xxiv. 10, &c. How often has instant judgment fallen upon perjurers, upon wicked persons who have imprecated God's wrath! A man in a village in Scotland, competed with others which could use the most horrid oaths, and was smitten with swelling of the tongue so that he could not draw it into his mouth, and died in three days. Heaven cannot be inhabited by the profane; hell must be their portion, and even there I doubt if the swearer will find a fallen angel so vile as himself.

APPLICATION.

1. *The remedy.* Solemn consideration of the grandeur and glory of God. Consider how angels act, &c. Guard your lips, watch against the rising of your heart; pray for God's Holy Spirit to change your soul: you must be new creatures. Dwell upon the senselessness of the crime, &c.

2. *Let Christians set a striking example in reverencing God's name.* And let their example and influence check bold transgressors, instruct our children, &c.

LIBERALITY AND SELFISHNESS CONTRASTED.

"There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."—PROVERBS xi. 24, 25.

OUR subject directs us to two very opposite courses, and the general consequences

of each. The truths of the text are of a very important character; they include the reactive influences which benevolence and selfishness produce, and are followed by a most cheering and delightful promise to the generous and liberal soul. When we remember that the second great command respects our fellow-creatures, an apology will not be necessary for calling your attention to an entire discourse on these topics; yet, lest any should conclude, that religion is constituted of those actions which have respect to mankind only, allow me to remind you, that all acceptable piety commences with repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; these, connected with regeneration, form a basis for the structure of personal piety. Personal piety includes supreme love to God, and unfeigned love to our fellow-men. Our text specifies one branch of our love to mankind, and it is beneficence; observe, then, the contrast instituted, and the promise made.

I. The contrast instituted. Observe this contrast,

1. *In reference to the characters introduced.* One is described as a scatterer, that is, one who distributes, a person of feeling mind and generous enlarged heart; one whose soul is expanded and warm. This character refers to the *habit*, to the prevailing disposition and conduct, not to an occasional act, &c. It includes also *purity* of motive, not an ostentatious giver, who makes it the subject of parade and show. Jesus describes the truly generous as not allowing the left hand to know, &c. This character also implies *perseverance* in well-doing. Abounding and continuing, &c. Now the other is described as a *withholder*, that is, a selfish man. One niggardly, of contracted spirit; one afraid to distribute of his substance. Who hoards it up, and thus monopolizes what God confers; views himself as the end, and not the channel of God's bounty; not like the ocean yielding freely to the water-spout; not like the clouds which give their plenteous rain; nor like the earth yielding its increase, &c.

2. *The contrast of the text respects the results arising from the conduct specified.* He who scatters increaseth.

(1.) Now this is often the case, even as it respects temporal blessings. Beneficence often obtains a reward in kind; God has a thousand ways of securing this. The widow who dared to share her meal and oil with the prophet, had it miraculously continued to her. It is not often that really benevolent persons sink into want. David's experience was, that he never saw the righteous forsaken, &c.

(2.) It is ever the case in reference to internal enjoyment; and what is the end of all we have but enjoyment? Now the good man enjoys what he has. There is God's blessing on it, and with it, and in it; he has the satisfaction which a truly good and sanctified conscience confers. If spiritual blessings are given in exchange for our temporal benefactions, surely the recompense is ample and sufficient.

(3.) This will surely be the case in reference to an eternal reward. The day is coming when every one shall receive a reward for every deed of goodness and mercy; when every kind word, and action, and visit, and gift, shall be noticed, acknowledged, and recompensed. We are instructed in this, where Christ says, though the poor cannot recompense, yet ye "shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." He that withholdeth tendeth to poverty. There are claims which must have a preference. Our own wants and those of our families, prudent arrangement for the contingencies of life. These things "are meet." But he who withholdeth, &c., more than this, it often tendeth to poverty. Some withhold, because they fear *want*, dare not trust divine providence; some withhold, because the demands of pride and fashion drain all their resources; some of a *sordid avaricious spirit*, they are earthworms; like the horseleech, or the grave, or the sea, they are ever craving; some withhold on the ground of the *ingratitude* of the poor. All these are so many evidences of a selfish nature. This often defeats its end.

(1.) Such cannot guard against contingencies. Failure of banks, fires, bankruptcies, &c. God can blight every movement; accidents, afflictions, can drain all dry; this is not unfrequently the case.

(2.) Then there is always poverty of enjoyment; however much, it is not enjoyed. Mental sterility, spiritual barrenness, nothing bright or cheering within; it is the frigid zone, winter, ice, darkness.

(3.) Then such shall be poor indeed at death; not a title to a better world; not a

jot or tittle can they take with them; they brought nothing into the world, &c. And when the Master demands an account, how fearfully appalling and eternally terrific; such is the contrast instituted. Observe,

II. THE PROMISE MADE. "The liberal soul," &c. That is, he shall flourish, &c.

(1.) God's blessing shall rest on his affairs; see Psalm xxvii. 3, xli. 1.

(2.) God's blessing shall rest on his soul; he shall be happy. He that hath mercy on the poor, "happy is he." God will answer his prayer, Isaiah lviii. 6, 7. His soul shall be very fruitful, Isaiah lviii. 10, 11. Such shall be established in divine things. "The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall be established." Now we may ascertain some grounds why the liberal soul, &c.

1. *This is the design of our being invested with these blessings.* All things have reference to some end; nothing made for itself. Look at the sun, the moon, the stars, the sea, &c. And God never gave wealth to be locked up in banks or cabinets, but to be diffused, &c. Every thing else is perversion, to scatter is the great design, &c.

2. *There is the benevolent character of God placed for our imitation.* "Be ye merciful as your Father," &c. "Be ye followers of God as dear children," &c. "He is good to all," &c. "With such sacrifices he is well pleased."

3. *There is the divine connection between means and end.* I have spoken of the end of our means. Let us look at the philosophy of using our gifts.

(1.) Take the golden grain, and hoard it up, it will moulder and rot; sow it, and it will yield thirty, sixty, &c.

(2.) Take the power and disposition to communicate knowledge, and your teaching will enlarge, and improve, and enrich your own minds.

(3.) Take Christian instrumentality to do good and employ it, and your ability will increase, and your own souls be abundantly blessed, you cannot fail to get good; just so those who scatter abroad, shall increase. The bread cast upon the waters shall not perish, &c. It is but little we can do; but a short period allotted us; let us then not be weary, &c. And let us, in the midst of all, seek enlarged communications of the divine favor. Let us not trust in our benevolence for acceptance with God. Let humility always clothe us, remembering that at best we are unprofitable servants.

THE SATISFACTION AND ADVANTAGES OF GODLINESS.

"But godliness with contentment is great gain."—1 TIM. vi. 6.

THERE is a very current maxim, of great value and importance, that a contented mind is a continual feast. Without a great degree of this, happiness is utterly impossible. Neither wealth, nor honor, nor the gay scenes of pleasure, can confer real solid enjoyment on the soul of man. To these we may add learning, knowledge, power, and influence; the whole of which may be possessed; and yet as it regards solid bliss, vanity may be written upon the whole, and vexation of spirit. In a thousand points we are vulnerable; to a thousand diseases we are exposed; a thousand events may arise to distract and distress us. Our very breath is in our nostrils, and however earthly good may surround us, we are liable every moment to be exiled by the stroke of death from the whole. We would invite all searchers after true happiness to seek that real blessing in another path. It may assuredly be found and enjoyed; and our text gives us the direction—the infallible recipe. "Godliness with contentment," says the apostle, "is great gain." Let us consider,

I. THE SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION OF GODLINESS.

II. THE TRUE NATURE OF CONTENTMENT.

III. THE ADVANTAGES ARISING FROM THE UNION OF THE TWO. Let us endeavor to give you,

I. A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION OF GODLINESS. And to a mere definition we must confine ourselves. It necessarily involves,

1. *A saving knowledge of God.* "This is life eternal," to know God in his natural attributes and moral perfections; in his works and government, especially as the Redeemer of the world—as the great source of love and mercy to our fallen race. To know this for ourselves—not because the Bible records it—the preacher declares it, but because we have experienced his power

and truth, and love in our own souls; because he is our God, and we are his children. Not a learned, metaphysical knowledge of God, but a personal, inward, experimental sense of his grace and mercy. To know him in Christ; God manifest in the flesh; Immanuel, God with us, and for us, and in us. Godliness includes,

2. *The indwelling of the Holy Spirit.* "Because ye are sons, or children, God hath sent forth," &c. "The Spirit of God beareth witness," &c. Hence the new covenant promise runs thus:—"I will put my Spirit," &c. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God," &c. "Know ye not that ye are the temples," &c. It includes,

3. *Conformity to the will of God.* The mind conformed—the heart conformed—the life conformed. The mind agreeing—the heart delighting—the life obeying. In this state the thoughts, desires, purposes, expressions, and actions, will be under divine authority and control. To please God will be the great end of life. Enoch had this testimony before his translation, that he pleased God. The apostle said he exercised himself to maintain a conscience, &c.

4. *Devotedness to his service and glory.* The godly desire to make God known; to show forth his praise; to extol him and exalt him before men; to labor with God and for God; by the entire surrender of all we are and have to his cause and glory. "Glorify God in all things." "Whether ye eat," &c. "No man liveth to himself."

> "Were the whole realm of nature mine,
> That were a present far too small."

"The love of Christ constraineth us," &c. This is godliness—the godliness of the New Testament; that which is saving, &c. We now pass on to consider,

II. THE TRUE NATURE OF CONTENTMENT. Now, this implies a state of mind acquiescing in the arrangements of God respecting us, and our lot and portion in the world. It is the opposite of ambition, anxiety, and avarice; it is equanimity of spirit, arising from an internal approbation of God's government and ways. Of course, there are special seasons when contentment is to be exhibited and proved. We need not wonder that persons should be contented when they have health, prosperity, friends, &c.; but contentment shines in the fiery furnace of affliction—in the night of adversity, when friends forsake us, or when by death we are bereaved of them. It flourisheth in persecution, in reproaches, in suffering, and in death. In one word, it reconciles the mind to the various circumstances in which God may choose to place us. Now, contentment is not a sullen, mechanical principle; not a stoical state of mind; not mere affectation. It is in harmony with the greatest possible sensitiveness; it can feel and discriminate; it would prefer ease, and enjoyment, and prosperity; but it can bend to the burden, bow to the correcting hand, drink the afflictive cup, submit to the severe stroke, or even resign itself to death. Now, a godly contentment is grounded,

1. *On the perfect excellency of the divine character.* God is the sum of all perfection; pure light, pure goodness. All that is great, and glorious, and wise, and merciful, and righteous, form his divine character. Contentment says, "His wisdom cannot err; his powerful arm cannot weary; his plans cannot be frustrated; his goodness cannot be exhausted; his love cannot change; his promises cannot fail; his righteousness cannot do wrong; and his tender mercy is over all his works, and it endures through all generations." Godly contentment rests,

2. *On the equity and benignancy of his government.* That government extends to all creatures, and all worlds; it combines all events. God cannot but reign righteously, for there is no iniquity in him. He must reign bountifully, for he is good to all. Just as the sun cannot shine without diffusing heat and light, so God in all his government must act righteously and benignantly. That righteous and good government, or providence, encircles me and you always, every instant, and in every place. That trial—that cross—that sorrow—that bereavement, was a part of it. "The Lord reigneth," &c., is the song of the Christian. Godly contentment rests,

3. *On the richness of the divine gifts* What has he not given us? The earth, the heavens, the sea, the sky, the valley, and the mountain—the vital atmosphere—the light of day. What more? Life, powers, sensibilities, &c.; many sources of enjoyment. His revealed will as the guide to immortality; exceeding great promises; his own Son—his ever blessed co-equal Son, the Prince of life, and the

Lord of glory. Here the apostle will assist us, "If God spared not his own Son," &c. Oh! read it with emphasis. With this Son, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, shall we not be content? What higher, what richer, what greater, what more enduring blessings could he have imparted? Godly contentment arises,

4. *From humbling views of ourselves.* As creatures, how unworthy, guilty, polluted, profitless, rebellious, wayward children! What have we merited? What is our desert? If God were to take all he might justly take, what should we have left? Oh! ask and reply to that question.

5. *From a sense of the infinite superiority of spiritual over earthly things.* That spiritual gifts are the perfect gifts; more precious and durable; more excellent, as adapted to the mind and heart; and if these be healthy, and happy, and prosperous, it must be well with us, and if not, it cannot be well with us. Whatever we may possess, we must be wretched and miserable indeed.

6. *From the evanescence and uncertainty of the present state of existence.* Look at the past, like the stream ever flowing—the present, fleeting—the future approaching. We are travelling to the sepulchre, to the divine tribunal, to eternity. The soul will then be all—the favor of God all—its salvation all.

III. THE ADVANTAGES ARISING FROM GODLINESS AND CONTENTMENT. "Great gain." Satisfaction of soul is the result; solid, internal enjoyment; comfort, which sets circumstances at defiance—which is within, a source of blessedness; what the world cannot give or take away; a perpetual feast; an invulnerable defence; an unchanging, radiant prospect; a certainty of blessedness. How great, how superlative, how everlasting this gain!

APPLICATION.

1. Examine yourselves on these two points—godliness and contentment.

2. They exercise a mutual influence on each other.

3. Admonish those who have neither.

AN UNGODLY SPIRIT REBUKED.

"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."—LUKE ix. 55.

OUR text presents us with a striking instance of the weakness and sinful infirmities of two of the eminent disciples of the Saviour. One of these was the beloved John, who afterwards became so distinguished for meekness and love. Between the Samaritans and the Jews the most deadly animosities prevailed; they even refused to each other the common civilities and courtesies of life. Hence the exclamation of the woman to Jesus, "How is it that thou, who art a Jew, askest water?" &c. Jesus had now set his face to go up to Jerusalem, and on his way had to pass through a Samaritan village, and he sent messengers that they would prepare for him. It is written that they would not receive him, because he was on his way to Jerusalem. They probably hoped that Christ would tarry with them, and decide the protracted controversy about the right place of worship in their favor. When James and John saw this, they indignantly exclaimed, "Wilt thou that we command fire?" &c. Their desire was that they should at once be consumed. They quote scripture in support of it; but wisely they refer it to Christ. The only good thing in it was the interrogation in reference to it, "Wilt thou?" The answer of our Redeemer is the text of this occasion, "But he turned and rebuked them," &c. From this striking and instructive portion of the divine word, we notice,

I. THAT THE PROFESSED DISCIPLES OF CHRIST MAY BE GREATLY INFLUENCED BY A WRONG SPIRIT. Let us,

1. *Notice some instances wherein this is exhibited.*

(1.) In maintaining bitterness of mind to those who have different views of divine truth. How rare it is to see exhibited a spirit of affectionate candor with regard to other sects and parties! Our own opinions are the right, the orthodox ones. To differ from us is to go from the way of truth. A very small variation is sufficient to set them down as heterodox, and perhaps to unchristianize them altogether. If we are compelled to speak well, it is in a cool tone, or with several deductions, which nullify all that has been said. This is sometimes the case in reference to doctrines, or forms of worship; to ordinances, to discipline, &c. Thus the state church treats dissenters, and thus dissenters treat the state church; Roman Catholics, Protest-

ants; and Protestants, Roman Catholics. Now, if Christ were present in this arena of disputation and strife, do you think he would agree either with the churchman or the dissenter in their unhallowed strifes? No! he would say to each, and to the whole, "Ye know not," &c.

2. *It is seen in carrying our dislike of men's sins into dislike of their persons.* We are to hate all evil, both in ourselves and others. We cannot detest too much the pollution which may be manifest in those around us; but this indignation and hatred must not include the person of the sinner. I must hate profligacy, but have compassion on the profligate; hate drunkenness, but feel for the drunkard; hate avarice, but love the souls of the avaricious; hate hypocrisy, but yearn over the hypocrite," &c. When our wrath goes beyond this, we tread unhallowed ground; we become transgressors; and Christ says to us, "Ye know not," &c.

3. *It is seen in cherishing an unmerciful and unforgiving spirit towards our enemies.* Nothing is so pre-eminently exhibited in the divine word as the indispensable importance of love, even to our enemies. We are commanded to put away all malice, and anger, and wrath. Our own forgiveness is even suspended on that of forgiving others; yet, how Christians err in this! How often they are implacable; how often feel and speak evil of their supposed enemies! Sometimes this is done on the most trivial ground—often arising from mere spleen and envy. I ask, is it so with any of you? Do you know of any one towards whom you thus feel? If so, the rebuke of Christ is addressed to you, "Ye know not," &c.

II. Let us account for the existence of this spirit. We marvel not at this in unconverted persons, who are strangers to the love of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit; but we expect the image and spirit of Jesus in the regenerated, converted follower of Christ.

1. *It arises from the very partially sanctified state of the heart.* Much of original corruption remains within; much spiritual territory to be possessed; attainments of grace low; the soul frigid and sterile.

2. *It arises from the influence of unhallowed prejudices in the mind.* In some cases imperfect education, or ministerial instruction; trained in an atmosphere of bigotry and strife; indoctrinated into sectarian principles instead of the principles of the gospel. Hence some ministers and churches are celebrated for bitterness of spirit, exclusiveness of feeling, and party animosity. Often our reading has much to do with it; the word of God a very secondary book; only read authors of our own party and creed, &c.

3. *From self-ignorance and self-deception.* "Ye know not," &c. Know our name, and creed, and peculiarities, but not our spirit. Know the spirit of others, and can condemn it, yet know it not in ourselves. Live without self-examination, with little self-communion, or fellowship with God; thus err and deceive our own souls. We come,

III. To specify the divine remedy for this wrong spirit.

1. *The cultivation of an humble and lowly spirit.* To see and feel our own unworthiness—our own defects, and failings, and sins. A sense of these will abase, occupy our reflections, confessions, &c. We shall neither have time nor disposition to unchristianize or excommunicate others.

2. *A diligent perusal of the divine word.* Here are admonitions, exhortations, counsels, &c.; here are beacons, as in the text; here our models, &c. Deeply imbued with the spirit of the word will greatly preserve us.

3. *A careful imitation of the example and spirit of Jesus.* His nature—his mission—his life, &c.; all breathe pure, infinite love, &c. His Spirit dwelling in us is religion. How did he feel, and act, and speak? What the design of his mission? What the influence of his love, &c.?

APPLICATION.

1. Attention to our spirit is of the utmost importance.

2. Our own happiness and improvement identified with it.

3. A right spirit only will recommend religion.

ON VAIN THOUGHTS.

"How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"—Jer. iv. 14.

The religion which is acceptable to God must be of the heart, it must have its dwelling in the heart, it must sanctify the

heart; and from a heart devoted to God, will issue works of righteousness to the divine glory. Hence great stress is laid upon this in the sacred volume, "My son, give me thine heart," &c. "A new heart will I give you," &c. And in the verse of the text, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart," &c. But our text limits us to one subject or branch of the heart, that is, the thoughts—"How long," &c. By thoughts we mean the exercise of the faculties of the mind confined within itself, in distinction to those operations of the mind, which are embodied in words or actions; therefore thoughts involve the cognizances or perceptions of the understanding, the conclusions of the judgment, the decisions and purposes of the will, and the ideas of the imagination, and the conclusions of the mind in general: but imaginations, desires, and purposes, will comprehend chiefly what we mean by thoughts. Let us consider the thoughts the text refers to, show their vanity, urge their exclusion from the heart, with some directions for securing that object.

I. THE THOUGHTS REFERRED TO. It is obvious that the thoughts must often be engaged in reference to the things of this life. Business, and the lawful concerns of our families, must employ our thoughts. Excess here is only sinful; to have the thoughts wholly absorbed. Now this is the case with many. But of the thoughts which are referred to I notice,

1. *Proud and high-minded thoughts.* When persons think more highly of themselves, &c.; when their defects, &c., are lessened, and supposed excellencies magnified. The human heart is naturally disposed to pride; proud thoughts will lead to a proud countenance and to pride of life.

2. *Thoughts which refer to human applause.* Thinking how we can obtain the good word and favor of the world; to have the good opinion, especially of those around us, and to bask in the beams of honor. Now these thoughts will also lead persons to a course of action degrading to themselves, and with which hypocrisy will be a main and leading ingredient; such will adopt soft and oily words, and an apparent condescension of gait and conduct.

3. *Worldly thoughts.* Anxiety concerning earthly good, "Why take ye thought," &c.? what shall I eat, &c.? Thus the soul will be chained down to the earth; only contemplate the material good of this life. Those thoughts lead to covetousness, which is idolatry.

4. *Envious and malignant thoughts.* Looking with pain and dislike on the good of others, feeling uneasy at their prosperity, anxious to depreciate their reputation, secretly preparing arrows of enmity to injure them.

5. *Thoughts of speculative wickedness.* When sin is acted in the mind, when evils are lodged in the soul and presented to the imagination, and then fostered in the prolific soil of the human heart. These thoughts are peculiarly prevalent in persons of corrupt imaginations; polluted conversation, and sensual books, greatly tend to this evil. I refer,

6. *To the general dissipation of thoughts.* When there is no mental order or self-government; when the mind is open to every intruding thought, and when the soul is like the channel of a muddy stream, ever receiving, and ever communicating that which is foolish, and trifling, and sinful. I connect with these, those whose thoughts are ever occupied with the mere ideal, always living in a world of fancy; the theatre, and works of fiction, greatly tend to produce and foster such thoughts. Let us,

II. SHOW THEIR VANITY. They are vain,

1. *As they are foolish.* Contrary to a sound understanding and real wisdom. No man can improve, either mentally or morally, under their influence; even as it regards the attainment of real knowledge and enjoyment as rational beings in this life, they are foolish. There are so many sources of mental enjoyment in the works of nature, in wholesome reading, in the discoveries of science, and wonders of art; but how foolish when we reflect that we are candidates for eternity!

2. *As they are empty.* Nothing substantial in them; they afford no real enjoyment, no true pleasure; as well might a man attempt to live on the wind, or in viewing pictures of food and drink.

3. *They are evil in the sight of God.* Our accountability extends to the thoughts—"God searcheth the heart," &c. Every thought is to be brought into judgment; evil thoughts must be forsaken and pardoned, or they will condemn us forever; and evil thoughts are generally the precursors of evil actions; they are often the seeds or germ, &c. We,

III. URGE THEIR EXCLUSION FROM THE

HEART, WITH SOME DIRECTIONS FOR SECURING THAT OBJECT. "How long," &c.; surely long enough already; our happiness, safety, and spiritual improvement, are sufficient reasons for the exclusion of these vain thoughts. But how is this great object to be secured? There must be,

1. *A deep conviction of the evil of these thoughts.* Feel them to be the plague of our souls; feel them to be our burden, our misery, &c. Nothing can be effectually done without this.

2. *We must be humbled before God on account of them.* They must be loathed, confessed with sincerity and abasement of heart before the Lord; the soul contrite before the Lord, covered as with sackcloth, &c.

3. *We must seek purification through the blood of Christ.* Christ's blood cleanseth from all sin, even sinful thoughts. It purifieth the conscience.

4. *We must daily supplicate the sanctifying power of the Spirit.* He is the sanctifier; he gives us spiritual power to resist evil; he will impart to the soul the things of Christ, and impart his holy mind; he will enable us to war with these thoughts, &c.

5. *Recognise God's omniscience and cultivate his fear.* Be in that fear all the day long. Remember he is conversant with our thoughts. Pray daily, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults," &c.

6. *Store the heart with the divine thoughts of his holy word.* "I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love." "Thy word have I hid in mine heart," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the exclusive spiritual claims God has upon us.*

2. *Labor after inward purity of heart.*

3. *Thoughts are only evil when cherished, &c.*,—When they "lodge within us." Reject them if possible on their approach, at any rate by prayer and faith exclude them if they have taken possession.

THE RIGHT EMPLOYMENT OF THE TONGUE.

"Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile."—PSALM XXXIV. 13.

WE have considered, on previous occasions, the spirit and the thoughts; our present subject is the tongue: a subject to which the scriptures often invite our attention. Unless the tongue be under the sanctifying influences of the grace of God, we are told by the apostle that our religion is vain, and that whoso offendeth not in word, that man is a perfect man. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, will bring forth wise and useful conversation. But an evil man, out of the bad treasure of his heart, will bring forth only a stream of pollution and death. A wholesome tongue, says Solomon, is a tree of life. Our subject then is the religious use of the tongue. Let us notice, then, what we should avoid; what use we should make of it; how we may do it; and the motives for so doing. In the use of the tongue,

I. WHAT SHOULD WE AVOID? The text specifies evil in the general—"from evil."

1. *From the evil of impiety and blasphemy.* All expressions against God's character, and glory, and works, and will. All witty citations and perversions of scripture. All jocular uses of the divine word. All rash and speculative speaking on the solemn concerns of the soul, religion, and eternity.

2. *From the evil of profaneness.* All cursing, swearing, and imprecations, taking God's name in vain. "Thou shalt not take the name," &c. All exclamations in which God's name is irreverently used. Many sincere Christians err here. Never use any of the divine titles but with awe and godly fear.

3. *From the evil of falsehood.* Now this is a monster evil—it assumes an almost endless variety of shapes and hues.

(1.) One of its forms is that of slander—when we declare that which is false to injure another.

(2.) Another is that of detraction, when we may not assert any positive evil, but withhold from the real merits of those of whom we speak, or endeavor to fritter away their excellencies, and rob them of their true reputation.

(3.) Evil speaking—when we become the conveyers of evil concerning others without good evidences of its truth; and also when we needlessly dwell on the infirmities or sins of others—this is severely reprehended in scripture. The backbiter is an odious character. Among other modes of falsehood there is,

(4.) That of false jesting, where persons

'nvent the ridiculous and the ludicrous, and palm it upon people as truth.

(5.) Falsehood used in trading and business, when an untrue impression is made upon a seller or buyer. Persons are guilty of this in extolling their articles, and others in cheapening them. What a world of iniquity is exhibited to the eye of Deity in the transactions of trade; how few even of professors have clean hands! I refer,

(6.) To flattery, when we desire to gratify persons, by stating excellencies which we do not believe them to possess. Some persons court this, are ever eagerly seeking the company of such, but it lessens not the guilt of the flatterer. We should not only keep ourselves from the evil of falsehood of all kinds, but also from the evil,

4. *Of talkativeness.* The tongue was never designed to be in perpetual motion as the muscles of the heart, or the blood in the veins. Talkativeness is an evil in itself, and also leadeth to much evil. "In a multitude of words there wanteth not sin." Few perpetual talkers have good consciences. There are times when it would be cruel to be silent, but there are surely seasons when it is cruel not to be so.

5. *From the evil of anger and contention.* Wrathful words—words spoken hastily—words designed to irritate, and incense, and provoke. How James refers to this, chapter iii. verse 5, &c. But we ask,

II. WHAT USE SHALL WE MAKE OF THE TONGUE?

1. *Let it be placed under the influences of wisdom.* Let it give utterance to that which is wise, and be the instrument of conveying knowledge. Have something to say when we speak, and something worth saying.

2. *Let it always be identified with truth* Abhor falsehood as mean and contemptible, but especially as grievous to God, and ruinous to the soul. "Speak the truth one to another," &c.

3. *Let it be the instrument of peace.* Avoid all wrangling, and strife, and contentions. This be your motto, "I am for peace." Let the tongue not be dipped in gall, nor in the oil of dissimulation, but the holy oil of amity and love; "speaking the truth in love."

4. *Let it be the minister of edification.* Use the tongue for the good of mankind, Col. iv. 6. Speak to instruct—to comfort—to encourage and warn, &c. We ask,

III. HOW WE MAKE THIS USE OF THE TONGUE?

1. *By seeking the sanctification of the heart.* The mouth is the channel for the stream from the inward fountain of the soul. From the state and fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh. If the fountain be pure, then will the streams be so. A heart filled with heavenly wisdom and holy love will ever produce a pious and edifying conversation. As the heart is, so will be the tongue.

2. *By having it under strict government and control.* If allowed to run riot, or left to itself, evil must be the result. A wise man will place under restriction this difficult member. He will discipline it. "Keep it as with bit and bridle," &c.

3. *Exercise Christian vigilance in reference to it.* Have watch as well as guard Keep a sentinel at the door of thy lips. Be slow also to speak. Exercise caution and circumspection, &c.

4. *Employ it in holy services.* Reading the divine word, prayer, praise, Christian conversation, &c. And let the prayer have especial respect to this difficult member. Now let us glance,

IV. AT SOME MOTIVES FOR THE RIGHT APPLICATION OF THE TONGUE. Because of the connection,

1. *Between the tongue and the conscience.* Is not conscience oftener grieved and defiled by the tongue than any thing else? Who does not know this? If a good conscience is worth having, then "Keep thy tongue," &c. Because of the connection,

2. *Between the tongue and our real prosperity.* "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life," &c. It will exert a favorable influence on the whole soul. On account of the connection,

3. *Between the tongue and our usefulness.* Our influence will greatly depend on this. If this member is extensively wrong we shall do little good in the world. If it be seasoned with the salt of grace we shall extensively be blessings to others. On account of the connection,

4. *Between the tongue and the judgment day.* Words as well as actions will be judged. All that we have said as well as done—every idle word. A falsehood will then cover with shame, and exclude from the heavenly state.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let the subject be the test of personal examination.*

2. *Let it be duly pondered in its momentous bearings on our highest and best interests.*

3. *Let those who are the slaves of an evil tongue seek deliverance by the power of divine truth and grace.* A new heart is essentially necessary.

SPIRITUAL APATHY DENOUNCED.

"Wo to them that are at ease in Zion."—Amos vi. 1.

Some men are at ease in their sins, though heinous and aggravated, through their consciences being seared and insensible; some are at ease in their indifference to religion, through the absorbing power of worldliness, or through the fascinating pleasures of life; some are at ease through carnal presumption, resting on the exercise of the final mercy of God; some are at ease by the delusions of self-righteousness, depending for acceptance and salvation through the deeds of the law; but to none of these classes does our text refer. It distinctly points to the professors of religion—the visible servants of God—the members of his church. "Wo to them that are at ease," not in the world, but "in Zion"—in the church. Let us define the characteristics; ascertain the causes; and show the evil of this state of mind. Let us,

I. Define the characteristics. And in this definition we shall more especially accompany the description, by showing the evidences of this state of heart and mind. In the church it is delightful to observe the spiritually-minded, the active, the liberal, the zealous followers of Christ. Now those at ease in Zion form the contrast of each of these classes. The apathy supposed in the text is,

1. *Opposed to spiritual-mindedness.* The mind is greatly under the power of the carnal principle; secular and earthly things have the ascendency; communion with God is rare and feeble; devotion at a low ebb; the thoughts, desires, feelings, &c., are of the earth, earthy; the rays of celestial light are but dim in the chamber of the understanding; and the fire of hallowed emotion is almost extinguished on the altar of the heart.

2. *It is opposed to holy activity.* Activity is one of the essential laws of the universe; it is especially so in relation to mind. The powers of the soul were destined for activity. Without this there can be neither health nor vigor. Activity is essential to the welfare of our own souls—essential to the discharge of the duties of the Christian life—essential to the prosperity of the church and kingdom of Christ in the world. Heaven is the scene of holy activity; hell is the theatre of wicked and malignant activity; the world is one field of varied yet incessant activity; and is the church of Christ the only sphere for unconcern and apathy? Is it not painfully evident, that not more than one in twenty are actively employed in honoring the Redeemer, and seeking the extension of his cause?

3. *It is opposed to generous liberality.* We cannot expect persons to be generous and self-denying for that which has no hold upon the heart. Most people will support what they greatly esteem and love; but if the heart is not influenced, there will be no generous liberality. What is given to the cause of God will be doled out on the principle of duty, or propriety, or respectability. Now, such a state of feeling will never provide the means for converting the world. How different this to the first Christian churches! Let me read a passage or two: Acts ii. 44, iv. 3, &c.; 2 Cor. viii. 1, &c. Men cannot be profuse in the family and in the world, in pleasure and luxuries, and calculating in the church, unless they are at ease in Zion.

4. *It is opposed to fervid zeal.* The concerns of personal religion are so great and lofty, that they demand the most intense devotedness of our powers to God. "Fervent in spirit." But besides these, there are the great interests of the cause of Jesus, none of which can be effectually promoted without fervid Christian zeal. All that is great, and glowing, and good in the visible kingdom of Christ, has been produced by the zeal of its loyal subjects, followed by the blessing of God. It was zeal that made our confessors and martyrs; zeal that raised and sustained the Reformers and the Puritans; zeal that gives men the missionary spirit, and supports them in their spheres of self-denial and suffering. We cannot dispense with this spirit, unless

Satan is to overcome, and the world have the ascendency. How criminal, then, is the apathy of that spirit of slumber which rests on many of the professors of religion! Let us, then,

II. ASCERTAIN THE CAUSE OF THIS EVIL. It may arise from,

1. *Mistakes as to the true nature of religion.* Religion is not only enjoyment and privilege, but duty, labor, and activity. Religion makes a man better and happier, but it also makes him the servant of the Saviour; a laborer in Christ's vineyard; a soldier in Christ's army. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God," &c.

2. *From the feeble influence which the doctrines of the cross produce within us.* These doctrines are calculated to constrain the soul to entire devotedness. "God forbid," &c. "Yea, doubtless," &c. The love of Christ should constrain us, &c. Who does not admire these lines?

> "Were the whole realm of nature mine,
> That were a present far too small:
> Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my life, my soul, my all."

But do we seriously believe them? do we feel them? If not, it is only sentiment—only poetry. Now, the apathy of the formal must greatly arise from the feeble influence of these doctrines on our hearts; and the cause of this must be, the great distance we live from Calvary. We do not cling to it, look up to the Sufferer, hear his dying groans, feel his love, or we could not be at ease in Zion.

3. *Unnecessary intercourse with the men and things of the world.* The most devout and holy know how chilling this is; even with the utmost watchfulness it is so. But if this atmosphere is often breathed—if this society is preferred—if much of our leisure time is thus occupied, how can it be otherwise that we should not be at ease in Zion?

4. *Forgetfulness of our responsibility.* We must every one give an account of himself, &c.; we are stewards, and must render an account of our stewardship; we are accountable for our talents, time, influence, property, &c.; we are accountable for all the good we possess ability to do, in the world and in the church. The day of reckoning will come, and how desirable that we be found faithful—that Christ may say, "Well done," &c. Let us, then,

III. SHOW THE EVIL OF THIS STATE OF MIND. "Wo to them," &c.

1. *It is evil in itself.* Displeasing to God; grieves his Spirit; perverts his mercies, &c.

2. *It is evil in its influence.*

(1.) On the persons who are at ease. It renders the soul barren; it robs it of peace; it often leads to apathy.

(2.) It is evil in its influence on the brethren; it is withering in its effects; it will infect others; lull others into that state of lethargy.

(3.) It is evil to the church; takes away its beauty and vigor; renders its influence almost powerless; throws it into the shade, and rejoices its adversaries.

(4.) Its influence is bad on the world. Men must see that it is not the religion of the New Testament, of Christ, and the apostles. It hinders the conversion of souls; hardens skeptics, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let the text be the test of our present condition.* Are we condemned by it? or do we pass through the ordeal with triumph? I fear most of us are condemned.

2. *Let it lead to greater devotedness.* All have need of this. Let us aim at this for our own sakes—for the sake of the church—especially for Christ's sake.

REAL SACRILEGE.

"Will a man rob God?"—MALACHI iii. 8.

ROBBERY—robbery! Why, you say, the very term has only meaning when used in connection with the most profligate and abandoned portion of society. How insulted any man would feel to be denounced as a robber; lost to all correct notions of righteousness; to be desperate, daring, and reckless; not to regard the rights and feelings of others. How low are such sunk in the scale of society! Surely, I have not one such person here. But our text seems to charge men with the highest kind of robbery—robbery of God. It has been observed, "To rob the poorest individual is felony; to usurp the prerogatives or riches of a monarch is treason; but to rob God is sacrilege." I fear that not only the Jews were guilty of this, but also that many here are not clear in this matter. "Will a man rob God?" What is it to rob God? The heinousness of doing so, and its consequences, be now therefore considered.

I. What is it to rob God? To rob God is to deprive him of any of his just rights. God has a just and equitable claim,

1. *On our homage and reverence.* If his name is profaned, or used with levity, or interlards our conversation, it is robbery of God. Jesus has shown us the importance of this, in making it the first petition of the prayer he taught his disciples, "Hallowed be thy name." Many persons do this through thoughtlessness, &c. God is greatly to be feared, and his venerable name held most sacred.

2. *God has a claim on our grateful love.* We ought to love supreme excellence—the most perfect good. God is such. Infinite love; eternal goodness and mercy. But see his goodness to us. How striking—bountiful—pitiful—constant—never-failing! Ought he not to be praised? Is he not worthy to be praised, &c. But if he is not extolled and blessed, then do we rob God. This is his right and due. Silence and indifference is guilt.

3. *God has a claim upon our obedience.* He is to be served; with lip and life; from the heart; with diligence, earnestness, &c. He is to be served before men. Every omission of duty robs him—every transgression robs him. Who, then, is not guilty? &c.

4. *God has a claim upon our time.* It is all his gift. Every year—month—day. He requires a portion of it to be devoted to him. He demands the youth of life; ought he not to have it? The flower of our days, &c. "Wilt thou not from this time?" &c. He demands a portion of every day in religious worship, morning and evening; prayer—thanksgiving—reading—meditation. He demands the day of holy rest; he did this from the creation; he did this by Moses in the law; he received this from the disciples. Who has not robbed God of youth—of daily time—of the sabbath?

5. *He has a claim upon our means and talents.* I refer to our ability of doing good. Honoring him; teaching the knowledge of him; glorifying him; supporting his cause; regarding his poor, &c. His interests are to have a high, extensive, and deep place in our affections and esteem. Who has not robbed God of these? How little he has had; how unfair a proportion, &c. Reply ye, who is free from guilt? &c. Consider,

II. The heinousness of robbing God. Now, it is not a light thing; it is a great sin; very grievous to him. Measure it,

1. *By the Being we rob.* God; not only the greatest, most exalted, and blessed Being, but our heavenly Father—our Preserver—our Saviour.

2. *By the persons guilty of it.* Recipients of his bounty—objects of his care—for whom he has given his own Son. Let Satan and unredeemed spirits be so infatuated; but can ransomed creatures—souls for whom the Saviour died?

3. *By its glaring rashness and presumption.* Men rob privately in the dark—in hope of escape; but we rob God when his eye is upon us; when he is surrounding us; while he is recording the deed—writing it down against us. What daring—what effrontery—what hardness and infatuation! Consider,

III. Its final results. It has presen evil results; it is unwise; it is self-injurious. We rob ourselves; we rob ourselves of his favor, his approval, his love, his blessing, his peace; but its final results must be calamitous. There will,

1. *Be the arrestment.* He will send his officers, &c.; bring us before his bar, &c. "We shall all stand before," &c.

2. *There will be the conviction.* We cannot clear ourselves. His own gaze will light up every conscience, and all our guilt will flash before our eyes. This conviction will be public.

3. *There will be the sentence.* Separation from the holy, the elevated, the happy. Doomed to the abode of the devil and his angels; everlasting blackness and fire. "The wicked shall be turned into hell," &c. I apply the subject by asking, what shall we do to avert the doom stated?

1. *There must be confession.* Go, and acknowledge your sin. He requires this. Do it humbly—ingenuously—sincerely.

2. *Restitution.* As far as possible. Cannot give him back youth and time; but now surrender yourselves, body, soul, and spirit.

3. *There must be amendment.* Repent ye, or reform ye. "Cease to do evil," &c. "Turn ye," &c. "If the wicked man," &c.

4. *There must be trust in Jesus Christ* Christ is our Mediator; the way—the fountain—the sacrifice, &c. Who will surrender himself thus to God? Seek mercy and obtain everlasting life.

INSTABILITY

"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."—GENESIS xlix. 4.

OUR text was one of the predictive declarations of the dying Jacob. It related to his first-born Reuben, who on account of an early flagrant transgression was disrobed of the dignity and privileges of the first-born; but we select the text as containing a great truth, or maxim, equally true whether we consider it in reference to mere mind, or to morals in general. Instability is the great impediment to pre-eminent excellence. The unstable scholar shall not excel in learning; the unstable tradesman shall not generally excel in worldly prosperity; the unstable philosopher shall not generally excel in intellectual attainments; decision, constancy, perseverance, are essential to success. It is just so in religion.

I. LET US SEEK OUT A FEW SIMPLE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE TEXT.

II. ACCOUNT FOR ITS EXISTENCE.

III. PRESCRIBE A REMEDY.

I. LET US SEEK OUT A FEW ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE TEXT.

1. *We often see this instability in inquirers after religion, and they do not excel in the formation of their moral character.* How many hear the word of God from principle, and often with pleasure, and are not rejecters of the truth? The word commends itself to their minds, they hear and they feel it; it produces conviction, emotion, and they resolve to yield themselves to God. How often these feelings are combined with prayer, with deep anxieties, and mental conflict; but they defer, they allow the internal disquietude to be allayed, they enter on the scenes of domestic duty or business, and then, alas, their averments and resolves all pass away. This is often repeated, week after week, year after year, and the heart still is unchanged and the character not formed. Never far from the banquet, but they do not enter; always under the sound of the gospel, but they do not obey it. "Unstable as water," &c.

2. *We often see this in professed Christians in reference to a variety of particulars.*

(1.) In reference to knowledge. Instability in scripture reading. There is one hallowed fountain of knowledge, the holy scriptures; it is our duty, our privilege, to be familiar and mighty here, but the reading of many is distinguished by inequality and instability, and therefore they remain children in understanding; babes in wisdom; when they ought to be approaching perfection, they are only acquainted with the first elements of divine truth.

(2.) Christians often do not excel in self-government, through instability in moral discipline. The evil of our nature is only partially removed in regeneration; then the old man is crucified, but lingering he requires the continual application of mortifying means. The divine direction is, "Work out your own salvation, for it is God," &c. "Mortify your members," &c. "Crucify the flesh," &c. We are to bring ourselves under restraint, &c. Bit and bridle to the tongue, &c. Yet how often is our moral feebleness displayed; almost as churlish, or morose, or passionate, or frivolous, as when we set out in religion. How is it? Our discipline has been unstable. By fits and starts; the rein has now been held tight, and then thrown loose over the necks of our passions, and thus unstable, we could not excel.

(3.) Christians often do not excel in fruitfulness through instability in the means of grace. Our conflicts and trials weaken us. The world is barren; earthly scenes make us spiritually lean and frigid; God has appointed the means of grace for our refreshment; these are the green pastures, the banqueting house, &c. "They that wait upon the Lord," &c. Instability in regard to these necessary and gracious appointments, always causes sterility and barrenness. God is dishonored, and his rich goodness undervalued.

(4.) Christians often do not excel in usefulness through instability in the exercise or cultivation of their talents. An active, persevering employment of our talents is essential to usefulness; we cannot do much good without this; we must seek a sphere of labor suited to our talents and time, &c. Enter on it heartily, and perseveringly follow it; thus we cannot fail to do some good, our power to do good will increase; additional talents will be given to him that hath. How many act like the man with one talent!

(5.) Christians often do not excel in the enjoyments of religion through instability

in the exercise of devotion. A devotional spirit brings immediately into close fellowship with God; this is especially connected with God's favor and loving-kindness; then he will cause his face to shine, &c. Thus we shall be lifted above the petty difficulties of this world. "Our path resemble the morning light, shining brighter," &c. Deserted, or neglected closets, formal prayers, &c., eat out the enjoyment of piety to the core; thus unstable as water, &c. In reference to instability,

II. Let us account for its existence.

1. *It is sometimes constitutional.* This is often the peculiar failing, the besetting sin, the most vulnerable part. Vacillation is often owing to the temperament, and the peculiar development of the individual; it is not however thus beyond remedy, but it will need greater determination, skill, and labor, to master it.

2. *It is often the result of inconsideration.* We do not duly ponder, fully examine, and then lay down those rules which under God's blessing would preserve us from it. A greater regard to a contemplative habit of mind, &c.

3. *Often occasioned by unwatchfulness.* We are too little on our watch-tower. Thus open to the wiles of the adversary, &c. For this evil, let us,

III. Prescribe a remedy. In one word, this is the grace of God; by the grace of God we can do all things, and, of course, overcome this evil. Grace will enlighten, restrain, govern, sanctify, make fruitful, useful, happy, &c.

1. *But its need must be felt.* Not labor in our own power, &c. Be conscious of our weakness, &c. Desire it, &c.

2. *But this grace must be sought.* We must ask for it, for this end, fervently, &c.

3. *This grace must influence us.* Not resisted, not neglected &c. But we must co-operate.

APPLICATION.

May our subject,

1. Lead us all to strict examination. Most, I fear, are chargeable in some way, or to some extent, with instability.

2. May we resolve this morning to give ourselves to God with purpose of heart, and to cleave to the Lord with all our souls.

3. To excel should be the desire of all the children of God.

SUPERSTITION.

"I perceive in all things ye are too superstitious."—Acts xvii. 22

The truth of the apostle's charge, in reference to the Athenians, is at hand, for to propitiate imaginary deities, they had filled their city with innumerable altars; idolatry had attained a kind of perfection in the city of Athens. Wealth, and genius, and authority, had all been presented at her shrine. In addition to the gods known and famed in their mythology, they had erected one altar to the unknown God. This had particularly struck the mind of the great apostle, and this he made the subject of his discourse. "Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship," &c. Superstition is defined, unnecessary fear, and is generally associated with reverence for imaginary beings. Let us glance,

I. At the origin and causes of superstition. The first superstitious act on record is presented to us in the holy scriptures, in the case of our first parents immediately after the fall, Gen. iii. 7, 8. Here guilt was the cause, ignorance or blindness was the result, and superstitious means of safety the scheme they adopted. How foolish and futile to cover themselves from the eye of omniscience, or to flee from an omnipresent God! We present this as the general basis of all superstition, ignorance of the word and works of Deity. As men are in darkness, and are strangers to these, they will be superstitious; as they emerge into the light of revelation and true knowledge of the works of God, they are freed from this baneful and distressing curse. Notice,

II. The universality of superstition.

1. *It has darkened by its dreary mists all countries and ages.* The ancient Jews, though favored with the light of a partial revelation, were not free from its idolatrous apostacies. Egypt may be termed its nursery; here it was cherished in ten thousand forms. At one period, they had 30,000 imaginary deities. Their two leading gods were Osiris and Isis,—thought to be the sun and moon. They also worshipped the ox, the dog, the wolf, the hawk, the crocodile, and the cat; they likewise adored trees, plants, and roots; the country was full of temples and priests; they taught the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, &c., and their lives were one round of ab

surd usages, rites, and customs. The ancient Carthaginians worshipped a variety of deities, especially Celestis, likewise called Urania, or the moon; and Saturn, known in scripture by the name Moloch. It was this monster idol, in whose burning arms the children were sacrificed, while their dying agonies and shrieks were drowned by the noise of drums and trumpets. Two hundred children were at one time sacrificed to this sanguinary deity. The Persians worshipped the sun, and paid divine honors to fire; but all ages and all countries, whether civilized or savage, have had their absurdities and superstitious customs. Neither war nor peace—ignorance nor learning—philosophy nor art—poetry nor music, could remove the baneful curse of superstition from the world.

2. *In the modern history of the world, superstition has held the empire of mind in its debasing and cruel grasp.* Let us look at this in three or four aspects. In reference,

(1.) To witchcraft. James the First wrote a learned work on witchcraft, and our English parliaments legislated for the punishment of this crime with death. Witch-finders were appointed in every district. A variety of ignorant and wicked modes of testifying the accused were adopted. Three thousand were put to death during the long parliament; in various parts of Germany not fewer than a hundred thousand—in England altogether not fewer than thirty thousand in two hundred years. Sir M. Hale, that upright and pious judge, condemned two to be burned in 1664, and two were executed in Northumberland so late as 1722.

(2.) To soothsaying and astrology. That is, the belief that the destiny of persons is influenced by the planets under which they are born. Gross superstition! The Romans, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks, Arabs, and the Brahmins of India, have all been devoted to this supposed art. In Europe astrology has been patronised by crowned heads, and by whole bodies of the learned. Dr. Dee, the author of the prophecies of the destruction of the metropolis, was a distinguished man in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and richly patronised by her majesty. In our own times we see the influence of this in our astrological almanacks, and the eager avidity with which every predictive pamphlet is bought and read. Allied to this, and built on it, is the whole mischievous fabric of fortune-telling, and yet thousands of otherwise intelligent persons give this their countenance, even in our own enlightened day and times.

(3.) The superstitious application of the unknown laws of nature. Eclipses of the sun or moon were viewed with horror, and there are recorded instances of learned persons, who, on such occasions, have fainted with fear; comets were judged to be omens of wars, earthquakes, famine, or pestilence. The northern light at one time filled beholders with alarm, and their imaginations often fancied they beheld horsemen, and chariots, and armies. The flitting lights on waste and damp lands were considered presages of peril; so also a variety of easily accounted for events; the ticking noise of a little insect, by many is called the death-watch; the screech owls screaming at the window—the dog howling in the night—the curling of the melting tallow in the candle—the falling of salt, &c.; so also the whole round of lucky or unfortunate days.

(4.) The superstitious rites associated with religion. It is the belief of some, even of the Protestant community, that at the baptism of a child the devil is cast out. Is it much better to imagine that the application of a little water to the face changes its nature, regenerates it, &c., as now taught by many in the church of England? Look also at the consecration of burial grounds—the tolling of church bells at the death of parishioners who desire it: in one word, look at every rite, and custom, and ceremony mixed up with religious worship, which is not clearly taught in the Bible, and no other term can be appropriately given to them than that of superstition.

III. The evils of superstition. These are manifold.

1. *It prostrates and degrades the exalted powers of the mind.* Mental slavery, night and darkness of the soul.

2. *It never leads to holiness.* Indeed superstition steps forth to take the place of genuine piety, and dispenses with repentance and obedience, &c., and gives shadows, and thus it cheats and deceives the mind.

3. *It is destructive to real peace and enjoyment.* Superstition has nothing bright or radiant to cheer. No, its temple is darkness—its spirit cruelty—its influence is terrifying.

4. *It keeps men from the one true way of*

salvation. One of Satan's chief instruments. Conscience, &c., demands religious interposition for its relief; Satan therefore gives it vanity, and lies, and superstition.

IV. THE REMEDY. We present it in one word—"knowledge."

1. *Knowledge of the divine works.* The light of natural philosophy, and the discoveries of science, have done much to lessen the superstition of our country; no one now faints at an eclipse, or dies of fright at the appearance of a comet. But,

2. *A knowledge of God's word. Here is pure truth.* All, every word simple truth—appropriate truth; it is sent for our deliverance. Oh, abide by it; seek its enlightening influences; let it dwell in you; obey it; believe, and worship, and live according to this book. One great truth. The Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil; of these superstition is one. It will teach you what to fear, and how to exemplify it. God, death, judgment, wrath to come. Let me urge this upon you. To you is the word of this salvation sent. God now commands all men everywhere to repent, &c.

THE CHARACTER AND BLESSEDNESS OF THE GODLY.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."—PSALM i. 1–3.

THIS delightful portion of the Old Testament, denominated the Psalms, contains an inexpressibly rich mine of precious treasure. And these treasures are of the most diversified character. It contains a portion of almost every variety the Bible presents to our view. It is descriptive and preceptive. It contains odes and sacred songs. It has both its praises and its prayers. It directs to duty, and exhibits the goodness and mercy of God in the promises he has given to them that love him. It exhibits the terrors of divine wrath to the wicked, and opens to the child of God a bright and glorious passage to eternal glory. This delightful book opens upon us with the language of blessing, and to this we now direct your prayerful attention. In this description of the godly man, notice,

I. THE EVILS WHICH HE AVOIDS. Here three terms and three representations are placed before us.

1. *He walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.* Now by the ungodly, we are to understand those who are more especially negatively wicked. That is, who may be free from notorious vices, but who are not the recipients of the grace and Spirit of God. Now there may be great external decency, and yet the heart in an ungodly state. The child of God does not walk in the counsel of these. He is not governed by their suggestions. Does not unite in their associations. He cannot do this, for two must be agreed, if they walk together.

2. *He standeth not in the way of sinners.* Now life is often represented as a course or way. Every act is a step in this way. —Now the way of the sinner is evil, a way of transgression. It is a broad way,—a way that declineth,—a way of darkness, and which terminates in the gulf beneath. Now the godly man does not stand in this way. His course is the narrow up-hill track, a way of light and comfort, and which leads to Zion's hill.

3. *He sitteth not in the seat of the scorner.* This is a most flagrantly wicked and presumptuous condition of mind. It is one expressive of deep depravity, reckless madness, and desperation. The scorner laughs at piety, treats religion with contempt, and ridicules the people of God. This is the most awful state of wickedness, and is generally the prelude to the just judgments of God. Now observe the degrees which the text presents to us, and their connection with each other.

(1.) Men listen to the counsel of the ungodly, and walk in their fellowship.

(2.) They go on until they can take up their position in the way of the practically evil.

(3.) Then they become hardened and infatuated, until they can mock at sin, and treat with scorn the condition of the pious.

II. THE COURSE WHICH HE PURSUES. And here we have,

1. *His delights.* That which is the highest source of enjoyment to him. And this is the sure index to the character, "He delights in the law of the Lord," in the holy scriptures; which contain the

revealed will of God to man. The word of God is precious to all his people. Job said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth," &c., Job xxiii. 12. David said, "The words of thy mouth are better to me than thousands of gold and silver." See Psalm cxix., which is full of the thoughts of the Psalmist on this subject.

2. *His practice.* He meditates in it day and night. Now to meditate, is to consider its meaning; to weigh it; to revolve it over in the mind. Now this is necessary to rightly understanding it, and benefiting by it. This is his constant practice. Day and night, morning and evening, when engaged in the affairs of the day, or perhaps when retired to his bed, his heart would silently dwell on the wonders of the divine law.

III. THE HAPPINESS HE ENJOYS. He is described as "blessed;" that is, he is made happy in the favor of God. Now this blessedness is described in several respects.

1. *In its spiritual fruitfulness.* "Like a tree," &c. "He shall neither be barren," &c. "He shall be strong and flourishing, in the courts," &c. He shall have his fruit in "season." Grace and strength according to his state, &c., of affliction—prosperity, &c.

2. *In the constancy of his profession.* "His leaf shall not wither," &c. He shall hold on his way,—stand fast in the faith of the gospel,—hold fast his profession,—not go back.

3. *Divine success shall attend all his engagements.* That is, all his spiritual engagements shall be blessed; and all his temporal affairs shall be connected with the benign influence of the providence of God. "All things shall work together for good," &c. See this beautifully illustrated, Psalm xxxvii. 3–6, and xxiii. and xxiv. 37. Such is the happiness of the godly man.

APPLICATION.

1. *See the connection between holiness and devoted attention to the divine word.* Verse 1, you see what evils he avoids; and verse 2, you see how this is done. Christ thus prayed, "Sanctify them by thy truth," &c.

2. *See the connection between daily meditation in the law of God, and spiritual prosperity.*

3. *Learn one great cause of spiritual weakness and barrenness.* Neglect of the law of the Lord. How often do you read it? How frequently meditate? &c. I entreat you to find time for this. Be Bible Christians. How rich the revelation we possess compared with David's portion! We have the prophecies, gospels, the Acts of the apostles, epistles, &c.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ORIGINAL STATE.

"Wherefore remember . . . . that at that time ye were without Christ."—EPHESIANS ii. 11, 12.

THE apostle is calling the attention of the Ephesians to the consideration of their former condition previous to their salvation by Jesus Christ. He refers to several particulars—Gentiles, aliens, strangers, hopeless, and without God in the world. He introduces this list of their miseries by the language of the text. At that time "without Christ." Our text refers to the believer's original condition, and calls his remembrance to it.

I. THE BELIEVER'S ORIGINAL CONDITION. "Without Christ." This description applies to all mankind, however diversified their natural state in other respects.

1. *Without the saving knowledge of Christ.* Do not know him in his dignity—graciousness—merits—value, &c.

2. *Without an experimental interest in Christ.* Not stones built upon him; not members of his body; not branches of Christ the living vine; not living by faith in him, and by him.

3. *Without love to Christ.* Not prizing him as the pearl of great price; not esteeming him "the fairest among ten thousand," &c.; not acquainted with Peter's feelings, "Lord, thou knowest," &c.

4. *Without regard to his authority.* Not recognising his lordship; not owning his authority, sceptre, laws, &c.; living as if there were no Christ, &c. Now let me remind you that such a state is one,

(1.) Of extreme evil. It is a sin against the infinite love of God; against the unceasing mercy of the Redeemer. Base ingratitude, &c.

(2.) Of great misery. Slaves, diseased, wretched.

(3.) Of imminent peril. Out of Christ; no hope; heirs of wrath and hell. Ex-

posed to eternal death. The text calls the believer,

II. To remember his original state.

1. *To remember it, and be humble before the Lord.* No room for spiritual pride. O think of the rock, and the hole of the pit, &c.

2. *To remember it, and celebrate it with thanksgiving.* The Christian should rejoice in Christ always, and in every thing give thanks.

3. *Remember it, and compassionate those who are still in that miserable condition.*

4. *Remember it, and consecrate ourselves to the service of the Lord.*

THE DIFFICULTIES OF SALVATION.

"And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"—1 Peter iv. 18.

The scriptures often present truth to us by way of contrast. This is a powerful way of impressing the mind. Truth and error, holiness and iniquity, heaven and hell, are often thus placed before us. In this way characters, and their necessary destinies, are often drawn in the inspired records of revelation. "Say ye to the righteous it shall be well," &c. "The wicked shall be driven away," &c. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous," &c. Such is the spirit of the text. "If the righteous scarcely," &c.

I. Notice the character. "The righteous." Now those who are represented in the New Testament as being evangelically righteous, are such,

1. *As are justified by the grace of God.* Not now guilty transgressors, but forgiven and considered righteous, and treated as such through faith in Christ. Until thus justified we are guilty, unrighteous, condemned before God. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 4. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith," Gal. iii. 24. Such,

2. *As are renewed in righteousness by the Spirit of God.* This is effected in regeneration, when God takes away the stony heart, &c.; when we are born of the incorruptible seed of the word of God, born of the Spirit; when all old things pass away, &c.; when, as the workmanship of God, we are created anew unto good works. Such,

3. *As are righteous by conformity of heart and life to the law of God.* When sanctification is begun, and carried on in the soul, and where the life yields the fruit of righteousness to the glory of God; when we know, and love, and do the will of our Father who is in heaven. Now this is the character. Notice,

II. The important truth implied. "That the righteous scarcely are saved." Not saved without difficulty. Before we enter upon this, observe,

1. *There is a cheering truth expressed.* That the righteous *are* saved. Now they are delivered from the reigning power, and from the guilt and condemnation of sin, and they have a title to eternal salvation; their names are written in heaven; they are children and heirs of God and eternal life; they have the earnest of glory in the grace dawning within them; they have the first fruits, &c.

2. *There is amplitude of provision, and sufficiency of means for their salvation.* The grace of God is abundant; the love of Christ passeth knowledge; the influences of the Spirit possess almighty energy; and as to means, there is the light of revelation, ordinances, promises, a throne of grace, intercession of Christ, &c. Yet mark, the salvation of the righteous is,

3. *Connected with great difficulty.*

(1.) The reception of salvation is so. The kingdom is likened to a pearl, and all must be sold to possess it. To a feast, and all must be forsaken to come to it. The gate is strait; the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, &c.

(2.) To retain present, and obtain eternal salvation is difficult. Look at the enemies of the Christian, the spirits of darkness, Satan and his host, the darts and the wiles of the devil; look at the situation of the Christian, in a world hostile to God; in arms against heaven; the seat of Satan; to the Christian it is a field of warfare, and how many are slain! a restless sea, and how many are wrecked! enchanted ground, and how many are bewitched with its fascinations; a race-course, and he must agonize to the goal of death. Look at the Christian's weakness, how infirm, how imperfect, what little strength! Need you wonder then that he is saved with difficulty?

Not one Christian that ever entered heaven had an overplus of grace; not one, too much holiness.

III. THE SOLEMN QUESTION PRESENTED. "Where shall the wicked and ungodly appear?" I need not stay to define who are signified by the wicked; and the ungodly means all who are strangers to the saving grace of God, who have not the Spirit of God, the image of God, who do not love and obey God. Now if the *pardoned* and *regenerated* are scarcely saved, where shall the *guilty* and *depraved* appear? if those who *fear* and obey God are, &c., where shall the *impious* and *profane* appear? if those who *deny* themselves are, &c., where shall the *profligate?* &c.; if those who make religion their *business* are scarcely saved, where shall the *neglecters* and *despisers* appear? if those who *believe* and *pray* are scarcely saved, where shall the *unbelieving* and *prayerless* appear? Finally, if those who *do good*, and labor to follow Christ are scarcely saved, where shall the *servants* of the *devil*, who do evil, appear? I leave these observations to your solemn and deliberate consideration; let reason reply, let conscience reply, let scripture reply. They will appear at the left hand of God. The end of the wicked and ungodly must be despair and eternal wo; none can escape who neglect this great salvation.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let the subject deeply impress you with the momentous meaning of the term* SAVED. Delivered from the wrath and misery of hell, and lifted up to heaven and eternal glory.

2. *Let the subject command all your energies and powers.* You cannot do too much, or sacrifice too much, in order to your salvation. See what men do for earthly glory, and for the riches of this world.

3. *Let the sinner and the ungodly now yield themselves to God.* There is mercy with God, &c. He invites, he promises. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him," &c.

THE SAINT'S PROSPERITY THE DELIGHT OF JEHOVAH.

"Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant."—PSALM xxxv 27

OUR text contains several words which may properly form topics for our present meditation.

I. THE CHARACTER TO WHOM THE TEXT REFERS. "His servant." Angels are the servants of the Lord. Jesus, the Mediator, became the servant of the Lord. All saints are such. "Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of God," &c. Jehovah, and the prince of darkness, divide the world. Only two classes; servants of sin, and of holiness. God's servants,

1. *Know his will.* Have ascertained wherein his pleasure consists.

2. *Wait upon him.* Appear before him to inquire—to ascertain his pleasure, &c. Their eyes are directed to the Lord.

3. *Obey his word.* His word is law; they have respect to all his commandments; delight in the law of the Lord.

4. *Depend upon him.* He gives them sustenance. He feeds, clothes, protects, rewards, &c.

II. THE PROSPERITY SPOKEN OF. This is not worldly prosperity; that is often the bane and ruin of the individual. But it is,

1. *Advancement in divine life.* Growing in conformity to God; rising higher in spiritual attainments, &c.; from the child to the man, &c.

2. *Vigor of the divine graces.* Faith strong—hope bright—love increasing—humility deepening, &c.

3. *Increase of divine peace.* "Peace flows as a river," &c.

4. *Usefulness in the divine cause.* Honoring God; establishing his kingdom, &c.

5. *Satisfaction with the divine portion.* Real enjoyment. "Godliness with contentment," &c. "Happy art thou," &c.

6. *Expectation of the divine glory.* "Looking for that blessed hope," &c.; waiting for the appearing of the Lamb.

III. THE DECLARATION MADE. "The Lord taketh pleasure," &c. He delighteth in the prosperity of his servants.

1. *He takes pleasure in making provision for it.* Our prosperity is of the Lord. All fruitfulness from him, &c. Now he has made ample provision.

2. *He takes pleasure in imparting the blessings.* He waits to supply; he expostulates. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing,' &c.

3. *He takes pleasure in observing their prosperity.* This is his delight, to see the

results of grace; the fruits of the Spirit; his own likeness, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let his servants magnify and bless his name.
2. Be faithful and persevering.
3. Who will become servants to God?

THE WAY AND MANNER OF ACCESS TO GOD.

"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."—EPHESIANS iii. 12.

By the fall man has become darkened, and his heart alienated and estranged from God. Sin keeps man separated from God, and exposes him to his severe displeasure. In redemption we are brought near to God. By the death of Jesus we have a new and living way opened into the holiest of all; now God can descend to the sinner, and the sinner ascend to God. Jesus is the ladder, or the way of access, between man and God—between heaven and earth. Now, this is the subject of the text. Notice,

I. OUR ACCESS TO GOD. It is only applicable to the believer. "Without faith," &c. We have especial access to God in three exercises:—

1. *Prayer.* Prayer is speaking to God, telling God our need, making known our requests, seeking his favor, &c.

2. *Praise.* Is celebrating the divine goodness; thanking God for his mercy and grace; speaking to him, and extolling his name; the overflowing of the grateful soul in the divine presence.

3. *Meditation.* This is the soul's silent intercourse with God; the mind contemplating, reflecting, and thinking upon God. Now, these may be separate or united exercises of the soul; they may be public, domestic, or private. Our access to God should be frequent, so as to recognise God always, and in all things. Notice,

II. THE MEDIUM OF OUR ACCESS TO GOD. "In whom," &c. That is, in Christ, see verse 11. Now, Christ is the medium and depositary of all spiritual blessings.

1. *God only holds intercourse with men through Christ.* "I am the way," &c. "One God, and one Mediator," &c. Of old, God would only be approached through the medium of sacrifices. "Without shedding of blood," &c. All these typified the Lord Jesus, the true and perfect sacrifice for the guilt of the world. There is but one way to the holiest of all—whether we come there to praise, or pray, or meditate—and that is the way consecrated for us by the blood of Christ.

2. *Sinners must be in Christ, to have comfortable access to God, and be accepted of him.* "In whom." We must be personally accepted in the Beloved before our services can please God. God does not demand any spiritual services from men until they are spiritually in Christ. The first great demand of God is, that we believe in the name of the Son of God. This brings us into a vital union with Christ. "There is no condemnation," &c. And then we are privileged to have access to God, by our union to his Son.

3. *Faith in Christ's person and work must distinguish each act of access to God.* The life of a Christian is a life of faith. Faith is not to be an occasional act of the soul, but the soul's constant exercise. When we approach God we should ever feel our personal *unworthiness*, and this should lead us to exercise faith in the *dignity* of Christ's person. We should feel our constant *guilt*, and this should lead us to trust in Christ's *death*. We should feel our *unfitness* to come before God, and this should lead us to depend on Christ's intercession at the right hand of God. Thus faith must always be exercised in our access to God.

III. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH GOD DESIRES US TO APPROACH HIM. With "boldness." This is enjoined, "Let us, therefore, come boldly," &c., see Heb. x. 19. Now, this is not to be irreverent, unhallowed boldness—not self-righteous, self-complacent boldness—not presumptuous boldness; but it must be with the boldness of confidence—with holy freedom and liberty of speech—with the boldness of expectation that our suit will be heard and received. Now, this boldness of the believer in his access to God may be grounded,

1. *On the nature of the Deity.* The Being we approach is not a despot—not a malevolent Being; his nature and his name is love. He is only terrible to incorrigible sinners. "He is the Lord merciful," &c. We may have boldness,

2. *From his divine relationship to us.* He is our Father—our spiritual Father. "As a Father," &c. "If we being evil," &c

The child fears not—doubts not; so, when we go to God, let us remember it is our privilege to address him as "Our Father," &c.

3. *From the delight he expresses in his people having access to him.* God is displeased if we have not frequent access. He invites us to live to him, and in him—the fellowship cannot be too close. He invites us to draw near—He allures, &c. The great end of all blessings is to draw us closer to God.

4. *From the presence of Christ in the holiest on our behalf.* Jesus is the officiating High Priest; his incense is ever ascending; all power is in Christ's hands; the Father always heareth him, &c. "We have an advocate with the Father."

5. *From the remembrance of past instances of success.* Never did the Lord falsify his word, forget his promise, or turn away the seeking seed of Jacob empty. He has been better to us not only than our fears, but has done for us better than we ever asked or thought.

APPLICATION.

1. *Urge the ungodly to immediate reconciliation.*

2. *Let the believer exult in his privilege of access to God.*

3. *Let holy, fervent boldness and confidence characterize our approaches to him.*

CONSTANT REJOICING.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."—PHIL. iv. 4.

IT has ever been one of the most common and powerful objections to Christianity, that it is opposed to the present happiness and enjoyment of mankind. Now this has been of immense injury to the Christian cause, especially in preventing young and lively persons giving it their attentive consideration. Dr. Watts had respect to this objection in those admirable lines—

> "The sorrows of the mind
> Be banish'd from this place;
> Religion never was design'd
> To make our pleasures less"

Now, this objection is truly fallacious. It originates in two misapprehensions.

(1.) As to the nature of rea joy. The silly mirth of the tavern or of the inebriated party, is mere noise, mere chaff; such joy reason itself cannot commend.

(2.) As to the gloom of the religious; now that is not always gloom which appears so. There may be seriousness of countenance, and a solemn state of mind, yet no gloom. Who can think of God, of death, and of eternity, and not be serious? The gloom of the pious, when real, does not arise from religion, but often from a deficiency of it, and the sufferings arising therefrom, &c. See that parent, he appears gloomy, he feels for his children. That woman, her countenance is sad, her husband is a mocker. No! true religion enforces and produces real, solid, abiding joy. The Christian has many causes of rejoicing; works of nature—of providence—of redemption; his own state, privileges, &c.; but there is one pre-eminent, the text supplies it, "Rejoice," &c. Notice,

I. THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S REJOICING. "Rejoice in the Lord." All Christian duties and privileges have respect to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is to be preached; we are to believe in him; to be baptized into him; found in him; here in the text, to rejoice in him. "Rejoice,"

1. *In the perfection and glory of his person.* Our Redeemer is the Lord of Hosts; the mighty God of Jacob. Immanuel, God with us. "Unto us a child," &c. He is the Lord of angels; object of eternal worship and praise; the king of glory; the fairest among ten thousand, &c.

2. *In the completeness of his work.* He has wrought out a perfect righteousness—he has overcome our foes—he has redeemed us to God—he has finished his saving arrangements.

3. *In the offices he fulfils.—He is our prophet.* A teacher from God. The great apostle and prophet of whom Moses, &c. Of the last and most perfect dispensation. *Our priest,* he has offered an acceptable sacrifice unto God. Ever intercedes, &c. *Our king.* Oh think of his goodness, graciousness, potency, glory. "Grace is poured into his lips," &c.

4. *In the tenderness of his sympathies.* "He is touched," &c. He does not break the bruised reed, &c. "As the head," &c.; never forgets, nor neglects, &c.

5. *In his inexhaustible fulness.* The believer entirely depends upon him. Out of his fulness, &c.; if it failed, what would

become of his church? We read of the unsearchable riches of his grace.

6. *In the immutable perpetuity of his regards.* "Having loved his own," &c. Whatever, or whoever fails, he will not. Our own condition will alter, but not his grace, &c. "The same yesterday," &c. This is the rock of triumph to the godly.

II. THE CONSTANCY OF THE CHRISTIAN'S REJOICING. "Alway: and again I say," &c. We doubt not that we should rejoice in prosperity, when we are happy, &c.; but this is not alway. We are to rejoice,

(1.) Under persecution. See Matthew v. 11, 12.

(2.) In temptations. See James i. 2, 4.

(3.) In keen afflictions and fiery trials. 1 Peter iv. 12. Hence some were tortured, &c. Not accepting deliverance. "Alway." "For all things work together," &c. Let us notice,

III. SOME OF THE REASONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTANT REJOICING.

1. *It is a duty which we owe to God.* Not left to our own will, &c. He says, 'Rejoice," &c. "Rejoice evermore." He says, "Arise, shine," &c.; besides, his Spirit produces this, "The fruit of the Spirit is joy," &c., Gal. v. 22.

2. *It is an exercise most profitable to ourselves.* Hear what the wise man says, "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance; a merry heart doeth good like a medicine." "And the joy of the Lord is our strength."

3. *It will do honor to our profession and recommend religion.* It is said of some that "every one had the countenance of a king;" of the disciples, "they took knowledge," &c. Moses bore the radiance of the divine beauty on his countenance. Spiritual rejoicing will recommend religion to those who are without. Seeing this, they will say, "We will go with you," &c.

4. *It will be preparatory to the enjoyments of heaven.* Heaven is the region of felicity. "In thy presence is fulness," &c.

> "The hill of Zion yields
> A thousand sacred sweets," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the superiority of the joys of religion to all other joys.* Divine—spiritual—real.

2. *Invite the inquirer after bliss, to Jesus.* Are you weary? Are you thirsty? Are you saying, "Who will show us any good?"

3. *How joyless the state of the condemned sinner!*

THE TEMPTATION OF PETER.

SKETCH I.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."—LUKE xxii. 31, 32.

IT is said that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope." Our text is one of those portions of the divine word, replete with useful instruction, and is well adapted to promote our spiritual security and well-being. Among the disciples of Christ, Peter occupies a very prominent and distinguished place. He was a bold, ardent, and devoted follower of the Saviour. He was one of the most distinguished of the apostles, and had the honor of opening the kingdom of Christ, both to the Jews and the Gentiles. By the characteristics of his mind he was exposed however to danger. Hence by his very spirit and temperament, he was in danger of impetuosity and rashness; an evidence of this immediately follows the text. "And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready," &c. His want of humble fear and his lamentable fall are beacons to us, and address us in the language of the apostle, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Observe in the text. A dangerous enemy referred to; the design of that enemy specified; the gracious intercession of Christ affirmed; and a subsequent duty enforced.

I. A DANGEROUS ENEMY REFERRED TO. That enemy is "Satan," who is justly described as our adversary, accuser, murderer, destroyer, &c. The character of Satan is fearfully exhibited in the history of our world. He was the tempter, who by the serpent seduced our first parents; he was the instigator of Cain to slay his brother Abel; he has been exerting his spiritual power to ruin and destroy human beings from that period to this. We see his hatred of the holy and the happy in the case of Job, chap. i. ver. 6, 7; see Zech

iii. 1, &c. We have also recorded his vile and impious attack on the Messiah, the Son of God, Matt. iv. 1, &c. Against this enemy we are incessantly warned. "Your adversary, the devil, goeth about," &c. "Resist the devil," &c. "Above all, take the shield of faith, by which ye may quench,' &c. Now this enemy,

1. *Is insidious in his attacks.* He is a spirit, and therefore, without notice, can have access—be in our dwellings—near our persons—inflaming our spirits, &c. Hence his subtlety is often the subject of scripture remark.

2. *Malevolent in his designs.* To blight, curse, destroy; to becloud the understanding, pervert the judgment, inflame the passions with evil, and pollute the conscience. He hates purity and happiness, and therefore labors to efface them.

3. *Persevering in his attacks.* It would appear that for thousands of years, he has been pursuing his cruel avocation, and he is still going about, &c. He assails the young convert—harasses the aged Christian—and often only ceases his temptations on the dismissal of the soul to the regions of light.

4. *Fearfully successful in his efforts.* He keeps the mass of mankind in his hellish thraldom. God of this world—prince of the power of the air, &c. His temptations keep myriads from godly decision, and unnumbered hosts of the followers of Christ have apostatized through his hellish devices. Such is the enemy presented to us in the text. We have,

II. The designs of this enemy specified. "Desired to have you," that is, desired to have the people of God under his power—directly exposed to his fiery darts—in his cruel grasp—that he may sift, &c.—exercise them with the most trying and harassing temptations. If possible, that they may utterly fail, and faint under the process, and thus be regained to the standard of sin and death. In tempting and sifting the people of God, he endeavors often to suggest,

1. *That they have no interest in the divine mercy.* That their faith and hope are counterfeit; that their joys are merely animal excitement; that theirs is false security; that they are yet in the gall of bitterness, &c. Thus he labors, that they may cast off their confidence in which they have great recompense of reward. He suggests,

2. *The hardness of God in his providence towards them.* He refers to the prosperity of the wicked; how they flourish as the green bay-tree, &c. No sorrow, no bands in their death, &c. Asaph was severely sifted on this subject, Psalm lxxiii. 1–17. He urges,

3. *That God has withdrawn his consolations.* That our deadness, formality, hypocrisy, &c., have provoked the Lord, and therefore that he has abandoned us. Often the pious thus sifted, have cried, "Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious," &c. "Is his mercy clean gone," &c. Or he excites,

4. *To indifference on the ground of divine mercy.* That the Lord will not be rigid with his people. That the divine partiality will overlook their infirmities. That they may sin, because grace doth abound; and perhaps he exhibits the failings of Abraham, of Moses, of David, of Peter, &c., and says, it is presumption to expect to be more holy than these. Let me just refer to certain circumstances, under which we give Satan great advantage in his temptations, and which are presented in that part of the history of Peter to which our text refers.

(1.) Great self-confidence, trusting to our experience—courage—wisdom, &c. &c.

(2.) Unwatchfulness. Being at ease. Spiritually indolent. Not on our guard.

(3.) Unnecessary admixture with the world. Sinful society. Worldly, trifling intercourse—Satan's ground. All these in Peter's case. I conclude by reminding you,

1. *That Satan desires to have you.* Each and all.

2. *That you are not ignorant of his devices.*

3. *To put on the whole armor of God.*

THE TEMPTATION OF PETER.

SKETCH II.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren."—Luke xxii. 31, 32.

The admonition of Christ to Peter, we should have supposed would have effectually preserved him from the perils to which he was exposed—an admonition so plain, so earnest, so emphatic—but alas! the sequel of his history proves the contrary. With

the warning fresh in his mind—with the courageous avowal yet hanging on his lips, the Saviour's hour of arrest arrives. He is seized by the violent band, and, at first, Peter magnanimously draws his sword, &c., forgetting that moral and not physical courage was demanded on the occasion. Christ is hurried away to the Jewish tribunal, and now Peter's defalcation commences, but Peter followed afar off; he then rashly ventures into the society of Christ's enemies, and afterwards falls into the snare Satan had laid for him, denying with oaths and curses that he knew the Messiah! Alas! how frail is man! How brittle his resolutions! How evanescent his goodness! "Like the morning cloud," &c. Let us now consider,

III. THE GRACIOUS INTERCESSION OF CHRIST. "But I have prayed for thee," &c. Here Christ stands before us in his character as the great High Priest of our profession. To pray for his people,

1. *Was necessarily connected with his office.* He has left us a rich instance in his prayer for the disciples, &c. John xvii. Doubtless he often prayed for his disciples when he spent whole nights in solitude, and secret devotion. And now "exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, he ever lives to make intercession," &c. In this exercise Christ delighted, and therefore his prayer would be earnest, tender, and faithful. His prayer,

2. *Was that Peter might not apostatize from the faith.* Peter evidently had faith in Christ—was a true and real believer, and Christ desired that he might not utterly cast off his trust and adherence to him. But how does this agree with the result? Peter's faith was suspended—ceased to exercise its sustaining influence—did not repel the dart of the enemy, nor preserve him from sin. But Peter did not entirely and fully apostatize. He did not yield himself up to evil; desert Christ's standard, and go over to the enemies' cause. Sudden as was his sin, equally so was his contrition. Deep as was his guilt, still deeper his sorrow. Though cast down he was not destroyed; hence there is an immense difference between one gross sin, and entire apostacy. The best of men have been overcome by the former, without yielding to the latter. Observe,

3. *Christ's prayer was successful.* He obtained for Peter grace that held him even when over the gulf; that rescued him from the lion's mouth, from the very grasp of the destroyer. Peter became penitent, believing, and was restored to God's favor and mercy. He was reconverted. Lifted out of the mire and clay, &c. "Restore unto me the joys," &c. "If any man sin," &c. Notice,

IV. THE SUBSEQUENT DUTY ENFORCED. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Now let us ask,

1. *How he was to do this?*

(1.) By the exhibition of his own example. He would be a living trophy of the efficacy of the grace of God—its power to raise and restore. His own spirit would be inspired by the experience he had previously known; his love and gratitude would correspond in some degree with the mercies he had enjoyed. Thus his humility, his gratitude, and his zeal would have a favorable influence on his brethren.

(2.) By his instructions and counsels. He who had felt the severe, trying power of the enemy—who had reaped the grief and anguish of his own sin in departing from God—who had been arrested by the gracious look of the Saviour, surely would be best fitted to enlighten, admonish, and counsel others. Such would be most earnest in warning others.

(3.) By directing them to the only source of restoration. His fall and misery had brought him to know the power of Christ in saving, healing, and comforting. How he could speak of this! how enlarge and expatiate on it! how urge it! and in this way he could strengthen his brethren. He could do it,

(4.) By personal exertion on behalf of the fallen. If our sins and falls do not make us compassionate and pitiful, and solicitous for our fellow-erring Christians, it is strange indeed. Who that had fallen like Peter, could be harsh, and censorious, and indifferent to the brethren who had been overcome by temptation. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault," &c. "They that are strong should bear the infirmities of the weak," &c.

(5.) By fervent prayer to the Father of mercies on their behalf; as Christ did for Peter, Christians are to do for each other. See James v. 16; 1 John v. 15, 16, &c. We inquire,

2. *Why he was to do it?*

(1.) Gratitude to the Saviour. This

the best expression of it, to "strengthen the brethren." To exhibit his mind to them. Feel and pray, &c., as he did.

(2.) Love to the brethren. Feeling for them, knowing the misery of a fallen state, grief and distress of sinning against Christ.

(3.) Zeal for the cause of Christ. Would we have Satan to triumph—the church to be injured—the wicked to conquer? Surely not. It is lamentable when they fall, but worse when they remain in the pollution of their sin. Restored, they often are most valiant for Christ, &c. So Peter.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the mutability of the best of saints.* All frail, weak, &c.

2. *Learn the solace and security of the righteous.* The love and intercession of Christ.

3. *The necessity of repentance and reconversion.* Tears—confession—supplication—change of conduct, &c.

4. *How the church should treat the fallen.*

PRESERVATION FROM THE DESTROYER.

"By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer."—PSALM xvii. 4.

MAN'S present state is one of probation. Here he is on trial for eternity; here his principles will be tested by circumstances, and by the temptations of the evil one. But for his salvation and preservation God has made ample, available provision. Of their own ability no one could avoid and escape the influence of Satan's temptations. This terrific enemy by his subtlety, his untiring perseverance, would involve in ruin the most devoted, &c. Now the Psalmist tells how he kept himself, &c. "By the word of thy lips," &c. Let us make some observations,

I. ON THE DESTROYER.
II. HIS PATHS.
III. OUR MEANS OF PRESERVATION.

I. ON THE DESTROYER. The destroyer is Satan. His name is peculiarly appropriate. A murderer from the beginning. He destroyed himself, and his compeers in the first sin. He destroyed our first parents, and brought death, &c. His work is to destroy. He is a most successful destroyer; myriads, &c., of all ages, and countries, and classes.

1. *He destroys man's moral dignity.* Debases—brings from his lofty original state. Casts down—dims the fine gold. Transforms the sovereign into a slave; heir of glory, into an outcast. Removes the halo of glory, and covers with shame and ignominy.

2. *He has destroyed our portion.* Our original Eden with its plenitude of blessedness. Beggared our race; involved in treason; then proscription, and confiscation, and poverty followed. Portion of health, also gave sickness and pain, &c.

3. *He destroys the body.* Introduced death, made a sepulchre of the world. Smote that beautiful temple of God; caused it to decay and fall, and moulder in the dust. Go to the beds of the dying, &c. Go to the grave-yard, &c.

4. *He destroys the soul.* Makes it morally wretched here. Appals it with guilt; exposes it to wrath; deludes, poisons it; entices it into the black pathway of wo; and finally triumphs in its everlasting condemnation and misery. Draws it down to the everlasting abodes prepared for himself and his angels.

II. HIS PATHS. Only one way, broad, dark, downhill, delusive, &c., way of sin. But in this way are many paths.

1. *There is the path of skepticism.* Rejection of truth—of divine revelation—of God's existence—of providence—of the divine claims, &c.

2. *The path of the scorner.* Who sneer and treat with ridicule serious and eternal things. Fools who mock at sin.

3. *The path of the pleasure-taker.* Lovers of pleasure more than God; who run into excess and riot, &c. Those who are found in the scenes of mirth, in the ball-room, &c.

4. *The path of the worldly.* Who love the present evil world; who seek its treasures only; live on it and in it. Children of this world, creatures of time and the present.

5. *The path of the trifler.* Who understands and feels, &c., but still treats God and the soul as inferior objects. Who is not duly affected, not decided, &c., wile away means, opportunities, and life itself.

6. *The path of the self-righteous.* Who turn from the gospel and the cross of Christ, and lean to their own righteousness, &c. Trust in themselves, like the Pharisees of

old, &c. All these, with many others, are the paths of the destroyer.

III. Our means of preservation. "By the word of thy lips," &c. The word of God is the grand instrument of our safety, &c. Let us see this established from other portions of the scriptures, Psalm cxix. 9 and 11; Psalm xxxvii. 31. I observe,

1. *The word of God is the means of our deliverance from these paths.* God's word proclaims liberty, &c. "Ye shall know the truth," &c. Christ's words deliver from the power of Satan, &c. The preaching of the gospel is the power of God, &c. The destroyer cannot resist the almighty word, &c.

2. *It also guides those whom it delivers.* "Thou shalt guide me," &c. It reveals the way of life, shines upon it, &c. Makes our duty plain, exposes the snares, &c. Preserves from Satan's devices.

3. *It preserves those also whom it guides.* "Kept by the power of God," &c. Commend you to God and the word of his grace. It sanctifies, &c.; thus Christ employed it as the sword, defensive and offensive, "Thus it is written," John xvii. 14, 19. Now in addition to the instrument of safety, there is its use, its application; "by the word;" by its perusal; by meditating on it; by applying it in faith; by it being prayerfully employed.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let us not forget our peril.* Watch, &c. Be vigilant, &c.

2. *Remember our remedy.* Be familiar with it, &c.

3. *Urge all to escape, &c.* The way is open, you are invited, warned, entreated, &c.

SAINTS THE TEMPLE OF GOD.

"For ye are the temple of the living God."—2 Corinthians vi 16.

The term temple is one which peculiarly designates the habitation of the Godhead. Hence the heaven of heavens is in glorious reality the most holy place, and is the proper, essential temple of the universe. But the word, as you are aware, was applied to that magnificent structure erected by Solomon, and which is so often referred to in the Old Testament scriptures. To the first there was added the second temple, to which the prophet Haggai referred, "The glory of the latter house," &c. To this temple Christ went up in his youth—and this he purified by the expulsion of the buyers and sellers—and the destruction of this he clearly foretold. The word temple may, by a spiritual application of the term, be applied to the whole New Testament church; but our text applies it to individual Christians, and so it is used in several parallel passages; 1 Cor. iii. 16, and vi. 19; Eph. ii. 21; and 1 Pet. ii. 5. Now, let us on this occasion,

I. Consider the resplendent similitude.

II. The privileges involved in it. And,

III. The duties arising from it.

I. Consider the resplendent similitude. Now, when we say the Christian is the temple of God, we observe the appropriateness,

1. *In its construction.* It was of divine devisal; its form, its plans, &c., were all of God. He was the architect and artificer; the emanation of his own good, wise, and holy mind. Now, the salvation of the soul, involving its restoration from sin, and misery, and death, was entirely of God; his own infinite skill devised the whole scheme. It was the bright emanation of his holy and compassionate mind, not the production of human knowledge and power, &c.

2. *In its erection.* The materials,

(1.) Originally unfit, distant. So in reference to human beings—carnal, defiled, far off. These materials were,

(2.) Prepared and rendered suitable; so the soul enlightened, purified, and converted, &c.; brought nigh.

(3.) In this a suitable instrumentality was appointed; not miracles, but means. God could have done it by either; so he employs his servants, his word, his ordinances; men of rare gifts and powers, &c.

3. *In its dedication.* When finished, the temple was dedicated, publicly, devotionally, entirely. Just so the Christian. To this we are repeatedly called. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God," &c. This is called putting on the Lord Jesus; confessing Christ before men; making a good profession. Now, this must be done publicly before men; devoutly; with

fervent prayer; entirely; consecrating our whole selves, &c. The similitude is seen,

4. *In its moral magnificence.* The grandeur of the temple filled with wonder and amazement; overawed, when completed, &c. Now, there is a moral magnificence in the Christian character. How changed. What a transformation; were we to say from a brute to an angel, it would not do justice to it. A rebel, now a friend; an alien, now a child; a curse, now a blessing; the palace of demons, now the dwelling of God; truth in the place of error; knowledge instead of darkness; wisdom in the place of folly; purity instead of defilement; righteousness instead of sin; heaven instead of hell. Now, let us consider,

II. The privileges involved.

1. *The divine recognition.* He owned the temple—called it his—put his name on it; thus it was hallowed and glorious Now, so does God treat his servants; he calls them his own—gives them his name. "My sons and my daughters," &c.; my people; my jewels.

2. *Divine residence.* God dwelt in the temple; his glory filled it. He was there addressed in prayer and praise; he was consulted, worshipped, &c. Now, all this is the privilege of the saint. "Dwell in you," &c. "We will come unto you," &c. We may commune, speak his praise, seek his mind, &c.

3. *Divine benediction.* God's blessing was eminently in it, and on it, and for it. Prophecies and promises. "My heart and mine eyes," &c. "Whereby are given to us great and precious promises," &c. God's blessing is upon his people. Now consider,

III. The duties arising from it. Now, the following, selected from many, must suffice:—

1. *Purity.* The temple was to be holy; not for profane use—not for carnal purposes. Now, God cannot delight in us except as we are pure. The conscience, affections, &c., must be holy to the Lord. Now, we must seek after this, labor for it, &c.

2. *Constant service.* The fire was not to go out; the worship was to be incessant; the offerings regular. Now, he requires this from us. "Pray without ceasing; rejoice evermore," &c. Our offerings, too, must be constant; the offering of a broken spirit, &c.; our liberality to his cause, &c.

3. *Reverential awe and hallowed tranquillity.* The worship was to be with fear and reverence. God is greatly to be feared, &c. Fear before him, all his saints, &c.; peace, &c., is indispensable; God is not the author of confusion; we must put away all wrath, &c.; the spirit of the dove and the lamb.

4. *Reflection of God's glory.* The Jew went up and beheld the symbol of Deity; he shone forth there. Now, we are thus to be reflections of God's likeness; the world should see God in us. "Take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus," &c "Epistles read and known," &c. "Show forth his praise," &c. Now, these are the duties.

APPLICATION.

1. *What reason for humiliation and shame!* Are there not idols in this temple—impurities—disorder? &c. Let us bow down before the Lord; seek a fresh consecration, &c.

2. *Subject full of God's condescension.* "Will God dwell?" &c. "To that man will I look," &c.

3. *The soul of the sinner is Satan's seat.*

4. *Who will now become the temples of the Lord?*

DAVID'S REGRETS AND CONSOLATIONS.

"Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure," &c.—2 Samuel xxiii. 5.

The whole history of David is fraught with instruction. It was a most astonishing series of sunshine and cloud, of darkness and light, of prosperity and adversity, of sorrow and joy; but in the great providence of God he had now reached the margin of life. He had crossed the desert, and the goodly land was before him; he had weathered the storm, and the haven was in view; he had fought the good fight, and the crown glittered in prospect; he was uttering now his last words—his dying sayings, and they were worthy of the illustrious prophet, the royal monarch, and the highly-favored servant of the Lord. Let us consider the regrets, the experience, and

the happiness of David, as expressed in our text.

I. Observe his regrets. "Although my house," &c. The expressions of the text are elliptical: something is implied more than we read. He evidently meant that his house was not so,

1. *As it ought to be.* The family should resemble the celestial abodes of the blessed; full of God's light—the residence of the divine favor—the scene of divine obedience—the circle of divine love; in one word, what Joshua resolved, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." But in David's family there were jealousies, envyings, bickerings, disobedience to parents, rebellion, and almost every foul thing that could reflect the perdition beneath.

2. *It was not as David had desired it to be.* He had, doubtless, longed for the highest well-being of his family. His example had reflected the earnest piety of his own soul; his influence, his prayers, &c., doubtless had been incessantly offered; but instead of spiritual fertility, there was barrenness; instead of order, confusion; instead of holiness, sin.

3. *Yet it was as many of the families of the righteous have unhappily been.* Who can reflect on this without grief? The first family had within it Cain, a fratricide; Noah's family had within it Ham, the father of the Canaanites; Abraham's family had a mocking Ishmael; Isaac's, a profane Esau, &c. Then look at the sons of Aaron and Eli, and so of many others of the servants of God; but still the grief and regret was not the less. To how many does it apply here? How few the exceptions—how exceedingly rare! Can we account for it? We would refer,

(1.) To the truth that piety is not hereditary. The Jews erred in this, "We are the children of Abraham," &c. No! religion ever was, and ever will be, personal.

(2.) It often arises from the glaring imperfections and weaknesses of pious parents. Children often reason that religious persons should be faultless; they expect perfection, and the contrast is so striking. Our religion is so scanty, so feeble, light so glimmering, example so irregular, that children stumble, are prejudiced against religion, and perhaps rush into the world. We are not sure that one glaring inconsistency will not do more to harden them, than a year's propriety of conduct to do them good. Let this admonish every parent present who professes religion. There may be many things in your families to pity, but perhaps much more to blame. But observe,

II. David's personal experience. "Yet God hath made with me an everlasting," &c. He, doubtless, referred to the covenant of redeeming mercy, with which he was experimentally acquainted. Now this covenant, or agreement, is the great act of God in offering mercy to mankind, through the person and work of Christ, who is the Mediator of the new covenant. Now, this covenant is the subject of revelation, especially of New Testament revelation. To this covenant David had given his believing assent. He had applied it with all its blessings to his own soul, so that it became experimentally his. God allows all who believe to have the same interest in it, and happiness from it, that David had. Now, of this covenant he affirms,

1. *That it is everlasting.* Not only everlasting with regard to time, but in God's own mind and purpose before all time. This redeeming thought was part of his gracious design from all eternity. So is it everlasting in its duration. It was parallel with all time, and extends to all eternity; it is a covenant never to be annulled; it elevates its participants to everlasting dignity and joy; its grand promise is eternal life.

2. *It is ordered in all things.* As such, its mediation, its promises, its dispensations, its conditions, are all arranged and settled; nothing confused, &c.; like all God's works, reflecting his own order and harmony. The whole plan reflects God's infallible wisdom, and is certain to accomplish what he designed; for, observe,

3. *It is secure.* Men may violate covenants—God cannot; they may fail for want of ability, &c. Adverse circumstances may thwart; but this is sure—on a rock. It has been assailed, forsaken, &c.; but it is still sure. Hell and devils are in league, &c.; but it is sure,

(1.) To glorify its Author.

(2.) Reward the Mediator.

(3.) Save all believers.

(4.) And overthrow all its foes. Now though David's house was not so, &c., yet from this experience observe,

III. The happiness he enjoyed. This happiness arose,

1. *From the salvation he realized.* In the

covenant was "all his salvation." Salvation from past guilt and wrath, from pollution, from condemnation; salvation into God's favor and kingdom; salvation even in death; salvation, including the opening grave and eternal glory. So is all our salvation in this covenant; and so also from this all true and genuine happiness flows. No substitute for this; this is the one thing.

2. *From the satisfaction he expressed.* "All my desire." It was the pre-eminent thing, the absorbing, &c.; that which made up for every deficiency; that reconciled to every lot; that which was the end of life itself. Other things might be subordinately desired and valued; but this chiefly, this always, &c. "The Lord is the portion of my soul," &c. Nothing but an interest in God's covenant can or ought to be all our desire. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn to expect relative and domestic disappointments.* Here are our sweetest joys, or our keenest sorrows. Every home is not a sanctuary from toil, and trouble, and guilt; our houses are infected with the plague of sin.

2. *The responsibility of the parental office.* Tears and lamentations are worse, if possible, than hypocrisy, if we do not seek the salvation of our children. If you do not instruct, how can you mourn their ignorance? If you do not impress, and influence, and pray? &c. Do think of these things, &c. We shall all be constrained to do so before we leave our families. Let that hour often be anticipated; it will benefit us, &c.

3. *Think and feel for the children of the irreligious.* This one end of sabbath school tuition, to care for the children of the poor.

4. *Are you interested in this covenant?*

5. *Death-bed hopes must rest on this covenant alone.* Not on creeds, works, usefulness, &c.

THE LAW OF LIBERTY.

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."—JAMES i. 25.

OUR text, and the preceding verse, refer to the manner of hearing the divine word—and this is, indeed, a subject of great importance. It is important to take heed what we hear, and also how we hear, and likewise as to the results of our hearing. Some only hear with the external ear; they know what words we speak, but do not labor to comprehend the sense and signification. Others hear for the time, and try to understand; but when the benediction is pronounced they conceive all is over, and pay no further attention. Others hear, and retain a general knowledge and remembrance, but do not apply it to their own hearts and consciences, nor practise what they hear; but the good hearer "looketh into the perfect law," &c. Our text contains,

I. A STRIKING REPRESENTATION OF THE DIVINE WORD.

II. A TRUE PORTRAITURE OF THE CHRISTIAN HEARER.

I. A STRIKING REPRESENTATION OF THE DIVINE WORD. A threefold description.

1. *A law.* Law of God; the legislative enactments of King Messiah; the revealed will of God; the moral rule of action, given by one who had authority—Jehovah; binding upon those to whom it is addressed; promulged for their instruction and benefit; sanctioned by rewards and punishments Now this law,

2. *Is perfect.* As it is,

(1.) The law of a perfect Lawgiver.

(2.) A perfect rule of life. It ensures all that relates to the mind, lip, and life.

(3.) As it is perfectly equitable. Pure; free from all error; no weakness or imperfection; nothing overlooked, &c.

(4.) Perfect, as it relates to all states and circumstances in which men are placed. The monarch, the subject, the prince, and the beggar; all civil and social relationships are embodied.

(5.) It is absolutely sufficient; it needs no addition; cannot be improved.

(6.) Because it is the standard of all perfection. All other laws are good or bad as they resemble this.

3. *It is a perfect law of liberty.* Now three ideas here:

(1.) As a law of truth and equity, it frees the mind from the bondage of ignorance and error. "Ye shall know the truth," &c.

(2.) As a law of love and mercy, it brings us into the liberty of God's forgiving grace.

(3.) As a law of holiness, it frees the soul from the dominion of sin. "The law of the Lord," &c., see Psalm xix. 7. Our subject gives us,

II. A TRUE PORTRAITURE OF THE CHRISTIAN HEARER.

1. *He gives intense regard to the divine word.* Looketh, as the cherubim did, into the ark which contained the divine law. He does not give it casual or superficial attention, but intense and earnest; see this set forth, 1 Peter i. 10, &c. This is his spiritual habit, his Christian course. "He looketh" into it.

2. *He extensively retains what he hears.* "Not a forgetful hearer." The memory of persons differs exceedingly; liable to infirmities and decay. Not necessary to retain the words, but the sense and meaning. How many are forgetful hearers! Is it not because they are not sufficiently interested? because they do not labor to remember? because they are not judicious in reference to hearing? Three simple rules:

(1.) Prepare for hearing by prayer, &c.

(2.) Be wakeful and intent in hearing.

(3.) Be deliberate and silent after hearing; avoid unnecessary talking for at least a few minutes, that it may sink into the mind.

3. *He exemplifies the word in his life and conduct.* "A doer of the work." Conforms to the law; obeys what is spoken; endeavors to live the truths of the divine word; walks in the good way, &c.; and in this he perseveres, for he "continueth therein." He follows on to hear, and learn, and to know, and do the will of God. The Christian hearer,

4. *Is a blessed, or happy character.* "Blessed in his deed." In this course he enjoys God's favor and blessing; the end of hearing is answered; his soul delights in the word; it is the joy of his heart; he is truly blessed; this has a good influence on him in the various eventful scenes of life.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us try ourselves by the text.
2. What reason for improvement.

THE CHRISTIAN'S REGARD FOR AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR.

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"—1 PETER i. 8.

THERE is, in real religion, a mutual reciprocated feeling between God and his people. Religion is said to consist in knowing God, and God is said to know his people. To be known of God is to be approved and accepted of him. Religion is represented as essentially including love and delight in God; and God has stated, in the most affectionate forms of expression, his love and delight in his people. The Christian dwells in God, and God dwells by his Holy Spirit in the hearts of his children. The Christian honors God, and whoso honoreth God, doth he also honor. Our text refers to three of the leading features of genuine spiritual piety.

I. FAITH IN AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR.
II. LOVE TO AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR.
III. JOY IN AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR.

I. FAITH IN AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR. Faith is contradistinguished from sight. Thomas believed only upon palpable evidence, when to doubt were impossible. The apostles and first disciples saw Christ; he tabernacled among them; they beheld and heard, &c.; yet, as regarded his divinity, his true Messiahship, they had to believe as his life and miracles testified of him. The saints, before his advent, had to believe on the ground of promises, prophecies, and types. These pointed to Christ, and giving full credit to these, they saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced and were glad. The followers of Jesus now have the record of the gospel, the testimony of the various evangelists and apostles; he is no longer in our world, living a life of spotlessness, teaching and performing miracles of grace and mercy. Faith believes the record which God hath given of his Son, receives it as a truth worthy of all acceptation, exclaims with Peter, "I believe that thou art Christ;" with the woman of Samaria, "This is indeed the Christ;" with the centurion, "Surely this is the Son of God;" with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." Believing is realizing Christ in all his offices, work, and grace; accepting him as God's gift, looking to him as the Lamb, building on him as the foundation, fleeing to him as the refuge, trusting in him as the only hope, &c. Now believing on such evidence, is what we do every day in other matters. In books of voyages, &c., in works on history, &c., in ancient

biography, &c., lives of Alfred the Great, Socrates, Alexander, &c. Now on the record of the New Testament writers we thus believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The next principle recognised is,

II. LOVE TO AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR. "Whom having not seen ye love." Now love to this unseen Saviour is grounded on a belief,

1. *Of his character as revealed in the divine word.* In him is every thing lovely and excellent; purity, truth, meekness, goodness, patience, grace. Desire of all nations; fairest among ten thousand, &c. This love is grounded,

2. *On a belief of what he has done for us.* Pitied us, &c. He hath redeemed us, &c., given himself for us, lived, sorrowed, died for us. Oh, who can have such claims as Christ?

"Were the whole realm of nature mine," &c.

3. *On a belief of the relationship and offices he sustains towards us.* He is our elder brother by choice, &c. He is our unfailing friend; he proved himself a friend in need, &c. He is our surety, took our place; our advocate, he ever liveth, &c. "We have an advocate with the Father." He is our life, the life of our souls, &c.

4. *We love him on the ground of faith in what he has engaged to do for his people.* What has he done already? Who can recite it? What is he doing? Oh, draw aside the veil, and look into the holiest of all, &c. But we now ask, what has he engaged to do? to keep, to guard, to sanctify, to support in death, to crown with glory, to confess us, &c., to give eternal life, &c. Believing all this, surely we may exclaim, "Whom having not seen we love." But,

III. WE REJOICE IN AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR. Faith works by love, and both are productive of joy.

1. *We rejoice.* This is the spiritual habit of the soul, to joy in God, to rejoice in Christ Jesus. It is said the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. To find Christ and know him is matter of great joy. The woman and silver penny, &c. The disciples going to Emmaus. Now this is joy peculiarly spiritual; joy of heart, really felt and experienced. It brightens the countenance, nerves the soul, fills the mouth with holy praise.

2. *This joy is beyond expression.* Cannot be told; words not to be found; speech too poor; requires another language, a seraph's tongue, &c.

3. *This joy is full of glory.* Joy from God's glorious mind, the joy of God; joy of the glorious gospel, joy full of the impress of Christ's glory, joy anticipating endless glory, a ray from the noontide light, a draught from the celestial fountain, a bunch of Canaan's grapes; the earnest, the first-fruits of that glory which shall be revealed, &c.; not full of anxiety, distress, or fear, but full of glory.

APPLICATION.

1. *Do you believe in Christ?* Have you received Christ, ventured all upon him? &c.

2. *Do you love Christ?* Do your thoughts, lives, &c., attest it?

3. *Do you rejoice?*

EARNESTNESS IN RELIGION INDISPENSABLE.

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."—MATT. xi. 12.

THE Saviour had just passed a high eulogium on John the Baptist, but had also stated that the least in the kingdom of heaven, &c. John was greater than any of the prophets in the dispensation in which he lived, and the office which he discharged; but he only heralded the Lord's anointed. He saw the dawn of the day, but the least of the Saviour's disciples was greater, more ennobled and favored by being in the kingdom, enjoying Christ, and sharing in the blessings of his reign. The Saviour then refers to the excitement which had been produced by the preaching of the Baptist. From his day the kingdom of heaven suffered violence. He went forth and called men to repentance, great multitudes heard and obeyed, and were baptized; and this eagerness still continued, for while the Jewish priests, and scribes, and Pharisees rejected the Saviour, the people, especially publicans, and harlots, and outcasts, pressed into the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven, or the New Testament dispensation, is still upon the earth, it reveals the same privileges, and offers the same

blessings now to us, &c.; and it must be accepted in the same way. Let us then consider,

I. THE NATURE OF THE VIOLENCE WHICH MUST BE EMPLOYED.

II. THE MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD IMPEL US TO EXERCISE IT.

I. THE NATURE OF THE VIOLENCE WHICH MUST BE EMPLOYED. By violence, we understand moral energy and fire. The idea is that of a person pressing through a crowd, or an army storming a citadel. Now the violence necessary to securing the blessings of salvation includes,

1. *A violence of resolution in opposition to vacillating inconstancy.* Many resolve and re-resolve, and yet do not advance. Their resolves are like the morning cloud and early dew. They say, they will go into the vineyard, but do not. Now this procrastination is the ruin of thousands. To attain the blessings of the gospel, there must be determinate violence; a vehement decision; a making up of the mind. Set your heart and soul, &c.

2. *This violence includes thorough self-denial, in opposition to ease, and self-indulgence.* Nature loves ease, apathy, self-indulgence. Christ demands mortification, self-denial, and cross-bearing. No man would enter the list of wrestlers with folded arms; no one compete for the wreath, and give way to luxury and enjoyment. We are to strive to enter in; literally, agonize. Self must be chased out of all its retreats and fastnesses. The old man must be crucified if Christ is to benefit us.

3. *This violence includes the effort of the whole soul in opposition to a divided heart.* God will be found of us when we seek him with the whole heart. Often the understanding, judgment, and conscience, agree, but the affections and will are opposed; now thus success cannot be realized. A double-minded man, or a man of two minds, is unstable, &c. There must be resolution, self-denial, and concentrated effort. Every faculty and feeling must enter on the work, &c.

4. *There must be the violence of ardent prayer in opposition to listlessness of desire.* The desires suited to those who would enter the kingdom, are described by hungering and thirsting, panting, fainting, &c. "My soul followeth hard," &c. There must be importunity. Knock, seek, appeal, cry out, plead, persevere. Languor can do nothing, the throne must be stormed. "I will not let thee go." This importunity is urged by Christ in the parable of the importunate widow, &c. Exemplified in the Syrophenician woman; need I add, that this ardent prayer must fasten itself by faith on the divine word. Rely on the testimony God has given, &c. Hold by the horns of the altar, &c.

II. CONSIDER THE MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD IMPEL US TO EXERCISE THIS VIOLENCE.

1. *The resistance with which our spirits have to contend.* Our own hearts will resist—unbelief, reigning sin, indolence of spirit, &c., enmity to God. The world will resist us by ridicule perhaps, or by interposing its spirit, and maxims, and enjoyments; especially its honors, pleasures, &c. Satan will resist us. When the father brought his afflicted child, who was possessed, Satan threw him down, &c. He will not tamely resign his palace and throne; now it is only by violence that we can succeed in overcoming the resistance.

2. *From the pre-eminent value of the object to be attained.* "A kingdom." The Persian monarch promised Esther to the extent of half his kingdom, but this is a whole kingdom, and a heavenly one; kingdom of grace here, and kingdom of glory forever. In this kingdom there is dignity, and riches, and enjoyments. An inheritance, a crown, dominion, and pleasures for evermore, a kingdom of eternal glory, everlasting felicity; is it not worth striving for? See how men strive for a morsel of bread, few riches, few honors; and what are all these but toys and bubbles, &c.

3. *On account of the limited period of effort which is afforded.* There might be some show of reason for indifference and ease, if we had a thousand years, or even a century. But our probation is most absolutely short, and exceedingly uncertain. We cannot boast of the morrow, cannot tell what a day may bring forth, &c. The poet has very solemnly said,

> "Lo, on a narrow neck of land,
> 'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand,
> Secure, insensible;
> A point of time, a moment's space,
> Removes me to that heavenly place,
> Or shuts me up in hell."

To-day, then, how earnest and violent ought we to be!

4. *On account of the awful loss we shall*

sustain if we do not gain it. But two states of existence hereafter; kingdom of glory, and kingdom of darkness—heaven and hell—paradise and perdition; and there is no way of gaining the one and shunning the other, but that specified in the text. Oh, then, is it not all-important, &c. This is a reason high as heaven, deep as the abyss of wo, and long as eternity. "The kingdom of heaven," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. To those who possess it, and are of it. This termination must be carried out. Show the same diligence to the end, &c.

2. Who will enter the lists for the kingdom of heaven, and now? We invite and urge all.

3. The thoughtless and indifferent must perish.

THE WORK OF RELIGION PERFECTED BY GOD.

"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the work of thine own hands."—PSALM CXXXVIII. 8.

PIETY is not the exhibition of any separate virtue or grace, but the union and harmony of all the graces in their due proportions, and well-regulated influence on the character and life of the possessor. For instance, it is not mere magnanimity, but holy heroism, mingled with circumspection and godly fear; it is not merely resolute confidence, but implicit trust, associated with vigilance and solicitude; it is not faith alone, but faith which produces good works, fruit of righteousness; it does not so look up to God as to forget the use of means, and unites these with fervent prayer for the divine blessing. We are led to this train of thought from the spirit of the text. See the confidence of the Psalmist, "The Lord will," &c. But that confidence is followed with earnest supplication. "Forsake not," &c. But let us consider the general tenor of the text. And we notice,

I. TRUE RELIGION IS THAT WHICH CONCERNETH US. It is emphatically the one great and supreme concern and end of life; it is the one thing needful. Not a vain thing, for "it is our life." Whether we consider the nature of the soul, our responsible condition, the uncertainty of life, the probable nearness of death, the solemnities of judgment, and the awful realities of eternity—religion is that which especially concerneth us. If so, then,

1. *It ought to be our first concern.* "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." This is the basis of all happiness and security, ought to be laid first; first in life, first every day, first in preference to all other things.

2. *It ought to be our chief concern.* Not only first, but most prominent. Exercising our chief thoughts, meeting our chief desires, influencing our chief actions, &c. It must have the ascendency if it is to prosper. Religion, if at all secondary, will decline. As the heart is one of the chief vital organs of the body, so the affections surrendered to God, must be chiefly swayed by his Spirit and grace.

3. *It must be our personal concern.* Friends may do much for our religious comfort and welfare, but only when our own personal exertions are put forth; none can repent for us, pray instead of us, meditate for us, enjoy or serve God for us. Religion is essentially personal, and every one must give an account for himself to God.

4. *It must be our constant concern.* Religion is not to be impulsive, but habitual. The healthy exercise of the mind; the daily rising of the emotions to God. Persevering obedience to the divine laws. "Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing," &c. Daily walking in the path of duty; growing in the divine likeness; warring the good warfare; faithful unto death; "always abounding in the work of the Lord," &c. Stability and perseverance essential to our salvation. We notice,

II. THAT TRUE RELIGION IS THE WORK OF GOD'S HANDS. Our concern, and God's work.

1. *God made all the arrangements necessary to our being religious.* Exercised his compassion—sent forth his Son to redeem us—given the Holy Spirit—commanded the heralds of truth— opened a way in his providence for our hearing the gospel, &c., &c.

2. *Religion in the soul is the direct production of divine influence.* Are we enlightened? "God who commanded the light out of darkness," &c. Are we converted? "He turned us from darkness," &c. Are we regenerated? "He hath begotten us again," &c. Are we justified?

We are "justified freely by his grace." "His workmanship, created anew to good works."

3. *Religion depends on the communications of his grace.* Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing." "He that hath begun the good work will carry it on," &c. He laid the foundation, and will bring on the head stone. All our comfort and strength, &c., are from God. But notice,

III. TRUE RELIGION IN THE BEST SAINTS IS YET IMPERFECT. "The Lord will perfect that," &c. Supposing all the graces of religion in the soul, they are only in a progressive state; none perfect. Who is perfect in knowledge? In faith? In patience? In obedience both as to matter and manner? In love? In resemblance to Jesus? How true of each and all, "There is yet very much land to be possessed," see Philippians iii. 12, &c. We observe,

IV. FOR A CONSUMMATION OF RELIGION EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN IS SOLICITOUS. They know and feel their imperfections; they mourn and grieve; they long and desire. Now this solicitude is accompanied with consolation and hope; and this consolation and hope rest,

1. *On the divine engagements.* "The Lord will perfect," &c. He has engaged to do it. Given many promises. He will never leave nor forsake his people. He will be with them in the waters, and in the fire. "In six troubles," &c. This consolation and hope rest,

2. *On the unchanging mercy of God.* "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth," &c. God's engagements are all founded on his mercy, and not our worthiness. The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, &c., &c. Now his tender mercies are especially exercised towards his saints. This consolation and hope rest,

3. *On the unfailing efficacy of prayer.* Hence the prayer, "Forsake not the work," &c. "God will be inquired of." All the saints of God have been sustained, &c., but none without prayer. Prayer is God's ordinance, and he has ever honored it. "The fervent effectual prayer of the righteous availeth much." All the saints of the Most High have been eminent for prayer; Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, the apostles, &c. All the glorified in heaven can attest, that praying breath was never spent in vain. Let our subject,

1. *Lead to individual examination.* Are we concerned about true personal religion?

2. *Let the subject cheer the servant of God.* "He will perfect," &c. Then throw away your fears. "His mercy endureth," &c. Then exercise hope and confidence in him.

3. *Let the subject incite to devotional diligence.* The use of God's appointed means in the spirit of humble, continuous prayer.

THE BELIEVER'S APPROACH TO GOD

"Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat: I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments."—JOB xxiii. 3, 4.

OBSERVE from these words,

I. THE PLACE OF APPROACH SPECIFIED. "His seat."

II. THE MANNER OF APPLICATION ADOPTED. "I would order my cause," &c.

III. THE MODE OF PLEADING DETERMINED "I would fill my mouth," &c.

I. THE PLACE OF APPROACH SPECIFIED. "That I might come even to his seat." The seat or throne of Jehovah is in the heaven of heavens, infinitely above the seats of cherubim and seraphim. We should ever have three views of the seat of Jehovah.

1. *Its grandeur.* See Isaiah vi. 1–3. "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." See also Ezekiel i. 26–28. "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the

appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake."

2. *Its purity.* God dwells in the holiest of all; the purity is such, that the heavens appear as if unclean before him. He sits upon the throne of his holiness. Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. The seraphim and cherubim continually cry, "Holy, holy, holy," &c. Now the grandeur of his seat might overwhelm us, and the purity of it fill us with terror as guilty sinners before him. Considering the throne or seat as such we might exclaim,

> "Lord, what shall earth and ashes do?
> We would adore our Maker too;
> From sin and dust to thee we cry,
> The Great, the Holy, and the High."

But there is another feature connected with the seat of Jehovah, and that is,

3. *Its graciousness.* "It is a throne of grace." Now here we come to God through Jesus Christ the propitiatory. Through the person and work of Christ, God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. This should never be forgotten in prayer. "There is one God," &c. "We have an advocate," &c. Now as a throne of grace the sinner may approach, the unworthy may draw near, obtain mercy, and find grace to help, &c. Observe,

II. THE MANNER OF APPROACH ADOPTED. "I would order my cause," &c. In presenting our cause before God, we must ever keep in view,

1. *Our utter unworthiness.* Job in one place confessed that he was vile. Should we not all feel thus. See the example of David, "Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications, in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness, and enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified," Psalm cxliii. 1, 2. We cannot be too conscious of our nothingness and sinfulness before God. In ordering our cause we must have respect,

2. *To the spirit of true sincerity.* "God is a spirit," &c. Lord, search me and try me, and "see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," Psalm cxxxix. 24. Then in ordering our cause before God, there must be,

3. *Submission and obedience to his will.* We may express our darkness, helplessness, and misery; we may call upon God to hear, and help, and deliver, but after all we must lie in his hand, wait his time, and be satisfied that what he doth shall be best. Notice,

III. THE MODE OF PLEADING DETERMINED. "I would fill my mouth with arguments." Now God leaves his people to plead before him. A fervent wrestling spirit, he will not, he cannot despise. Now there are many arguments which we may plead before God.

1. *There is the argument of his universal goodness.* He is good to all, and his tender mercies, &c. He blesses all his creatures. He clothes the grass, and feeds the ravens, causes his showers to fall upon the ground of the wicked, &c. If so, how much will he bless his own children, the objects of his love!

2. *There is the argument of his engagements and promises.* Now the engagements of God, relate to the *keeping* of his saints; to their preservation. To *giving* them all needful good. That he will *hear* all their cries, *deliver* them from all their enemies, *supply* all their wants, and never, never *leave* or forsake them. Such are powerful arguments. "Hath the Lord spoken, and shall he not perform? Hath he said it, and will he not bring it to pass?"

3. *There is the argument of his past loving-kindness.* Shall we not plead what he has done? He has been our *help* from our birth. He was our *benefactor* in youth, &c. What has he not done for us? How richly, freely hath he blessed us! Now we ought not to forget his past loving-kindness. We should plead it with gratitude, and infer, believing from it, his power and willingness to help us.

4. *There is the argument of his work within us.* Our desires for his presence and favor arise from the motions of his Spirit in our hearts. These longings are his own implanting. He has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, and this Spirit excites our longings after him. "For we should know not what to pray," &c.

5. *There is the argument of the advocacy of his Son.* Christ has died and risen from the dead, yea, he hath ascended, and ever lives to make intercession for us. "We have an advocate," &c. "Him the Father heareth always."

APPLICATION.

1. *Let me urge all anxious seekers of Christ to go to the seat of God.* He waits to save. He is ready to pardon.

2. *Here is the Christian's true resource in time of trouble.* Imitate Job. Say, "O that I knew where I might find him!" Then go to his seat, "Cast your burden upon him," &c.

3. *How truly wretched is a prayerless state!*

CHRISTIAN UNITY URGED.

"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace."—EPHESIANS iv. 3.

SIN has not only made man hostile to God, but has set one man in battle array against another. Shortly after Adam sinned against God, did his first-born slay his brother; and from that period of his foul deed of hatred and blood to the present, strife, and war, and revenge, have thrown their deep shade over the history of our world. Sin in its chief essential element is discord. It divides, separates, confuses, and distresses. Now those who are converted are not perfectly freed from all the remains of the carnal mind, and therefore in them are roots of bitterness which distract the hearts of the pious, and produce division and disunion among the friends of Jesus. In apostolical times, we see an instance of this between the holy Paul and Barnabas, who were greatly imbued with the Holy Ghost. This existing spirit in the visible church has led to various schemes for the promotion of greater affection among Christians. Yet up to this day divisions and distractions of the church continue. The only sure balm for the healing of these rancorous wounds is found in the text, "Endeavoring to keep," &c. Our text refers to the true principle of unity, and to the right method of maintaining it. The text refers,

I. TO THE TRUE PRINCIPLE OF UNITY. "Unity of spirit," not,

(1.) Denominational unity; where the members of a sect are allied by a certain name, creed, form of worship, &c. Which of the hundreds of sects, like Aaron's rod, shall swallow up all the rest? Not,

(2.) By an attempted uniformity. Before this can be effected, all minds must be uniform; all modes of education; all books, and reading, and study. Variety is the law of the universe, and is quite accordant with general unity. As the rays of light are formed of every color of the rainbow. As the various stars all present the splendor of the firmament. As the various gases combine in the atmosphere of life. As the various objects are all necessary to form the picturesque of the landscape. As the several features are essential to the beauty of the countenance. A tame and general uniformity in the church would be an anomaly in the universe. Not,

(3.) By extra liberal concessions. When persons are willing to forego any view of truth, &c., for the sake of visible harmony. Unity, even of the right kind, is too dearly paid for if purchased by the sacrifice of one grain of truth. No, the principle of the text is unity of spirit. And this spirit is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ," &c. Now supposing all Christians to have this, then there must be unity of spirit. Color, language, creed, mode of worship, will not, cannot prevent it. Now this unity of spirit involves,

1. *True spiritual affection.* Love one to another—love to all saints—love unfeigned—love that will produce sympathizing care, beneficence, tenderness, pity, and mutual prayer. Love in deed, and not merely in word.

2. *This spirit is essentially a spirit of humility.* Pride is the great cause of contention. Men never can be united, while they stand on the stilts of their own preconceived superior excellency. The man who says, "I am more righteous than thou," will always say to his brother, with the same breath, "Stand off!" But if we think of ourselves in the spirit of Christian humility, we shall be prostrated together in the dust; and thus before the footstool of God's mercy, the spirit of unity will be felt, and cherished.

3. *This spirit must ever be a spirit of kindly forbearance.* See verse 2. How often this is urged on our careful attention, Col. iii. 12, &c.; Rom. xiii. 1, &c. Thus only can the spirit of Christian unity be really promoted. But notice,

II. THE RIGHT METHOD OF MAINTAINING IT. Now this method is

1. *Personal.* We are to "keep the unity of the Spirit," &c. Every man for

himself. Not legislators to do it, or synods, or sects, but each Christian must keep his own spirit, and maintain that unity of feeling, that true catholicity of heart, which will abhor distraction and division. This method is associated with,

2. *Decided effort.* "Endeavoring." It will not come as a matter of course, but rather the opposite; therefore we must endeavor; strive for it; labor for it; read for it; pray for it; exhibit it whenever and wherever we can do so. This method is identified in the text,

3. *With a pacific compact.* "In the bond of peace." We are to consider ourselves and all true Christians, united in holy bonds of fraternal amity. We are to keep that bond inviolate. Use all methods for the bond being more close, and dear, and strong. Our motto must be, "I am for peace." Our spirit must be that of peace. We must seek the wisdom that is peaceable. We must especially pray that the heart may be engarrisoned, or kept by the peace of God, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. A firm and persevering regard to divine truth is compatible with this spirit.

2. A decided maintenance of the principles of true Christian liberty alone can lay a broad foundation for this peaceful unity.

3. Legitimate exertions for the removal of the corruptions and abuses of Christianity, will not break the Christian unity, however it may affect the unity of the denominations of the universal church. Luther—the puritans—Wesley—the Free Church of Scotland—dissenters in their present efforts, therefore, are not condemned by this subject.

CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

"That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."—JOHN xvii. 21.

NOTHING is oftener repeated than this, "There is only one church." The Roman Catholics loudly utter this; the church of England; and the various bodies of dissenters. It seems to be a settled principle mongst most Christians; but then, each sect arrogates to itself the exclusive title of the one church, and some do this to the exclusion of all other Christians. There never was a period when it became Christians to understand this subject more than at the present. Our subject leads us directly to it. It was the solemn prayer of the blessed Saviour, and reiterated three times in the course of his intercessory address to the Father, verses 11, 21, 22.

What is the church of Christ? The great body of believers scattered over the face of the world.

Is the church one? In one respect, indeed, it is. All converted, renewed persons are members of Christ's spiritual body; but in its visible aspect it is divided and torn—church against church, sect against sect, &c. This cannot be pleasing to God; it is explicitly opposed to Christ's prayer; it weakens the influence of Christianity; it must ultimately cease, and the text will eventually be accomplished. Before we enter upon our subject, we ask,

(1.) When and where did divisions commence? At Corinth; see 1 Cor. i. 12.

(2.) The cause of divisions; 1 Cor. iii. 3.

(3.) From that day the church of God has been the seat of disputation and variance.

I. TO WHAT EXTENT IS UNION IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST POSSIBLE?

II. HOW MAY WE CONTRIBUTE TO IT? And

III. WHY WE SHOULD DO SO.

I. TO WHAT EXTENT IS UNION IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST POSSIBLE? Absolute, minute, and universal oneness is, perhaps, impossible with imperfect and erring beings; but true Christians may be united,

1. *In spiritual affections.* Love is the very essence of religion; one main feature in the child of God; an essential principle in the mind renewed by divine grace. Surely it is not indispensable that persons should in all particulars hold all our sentiments to entitle them to our affection. The good Samaritan displayed kindness and generosity to the poor Jew. Love to the whole family of God is necessary to the existence of true religion, "By this shall all men know," &c. We should be united,

2. *In mutual supplications.* "Pray one for another," &c. This we are to do for all men, but especially for the family of Christ. If in error, we should seek for

their spiritual enlightenment; if weak, for their being strengthened. Now, fervent intercession for the whole church is calculated to beget greatness of soul, and catholicity of spirit.

3. *In ardent efforts for the extension of Christ's cause.* If Christians would forego their jealousies and bigoted animosities until the great common foe were conquered, they would have little to do in the end but join in the song of triumph. There is ample for all to do. The field is the world—dark, besotted, dreary, perishing. Should not all unite for its salvation? Ignorance, skepticism, profligacy, stupor, worldliness, &c.

4. *In holy emulation to glorify God.* Persons lose sight of this in seeking their own sectarian purposes. Few ask, "How does God view it?" Will he be pleased? Will it honor his word—please the blessed Spirit—exalt Christ? Self, alas! has the place of God—our opinions—our modes of worship, &c.—our denominations. If God were constantly before us, we should not be able to see these in a light of such magnitude. The sun would render the stars invisible; the sea would render the little rivulet perfectly insignificant. All Christians may unite to glorify God to this extent. Without sacrifice of truth, or compromise of principle, all thus may be one. We ask,

II. How may we contribute to this unity of the Christian church?

1. *By cherishing the Spirit's holy influence.* His motions tend to unity. He heals; he binds up; he harmonizes. We cannot drink deeply of this stream without there springing up the same spirit of love and unity.

2. *By setting the example of Christ before us.* Of him it is said, "He pleased not himself." How we should remember his numerous exhortations to humility and condescension, "Whoso will be greatest must be as a little child," see also John xiii. 14.

3. *By using always purity of speech.* Not using sectarian language; not the garbled expressions of this or that denomination. Many may be known by their prayers—by their modes of conversation. In Christ's kingdom there is only one language—the language of pure revelation; and this ought to be so spoken, that none should know what meeting we attend, or what sectarian name we bear; and in the latter days there will not be three hundred religious dialects as there are now. Human phraseology has done much to make divisions, and more to keep them up. To this, I add,

4. *Let us treat all Christians with candor and respect.* Let us excel in courtesy. While we honor all men, let us especially honor the friends of Jesus everywhere, and on every occasion. We ask,

III. Why we should labor for the unity of the Christian church?

1. *Because it is the will of God.* This ought to suffice. What parent does not love this in his family? God much more in his church.

2. *Christ prays for it.* It is one of the desires of the soul of the Saviour. He travails for this, and without it will not be satisfied.

3. *It will tend to our strength and comfort.* "Union is strength." It is more, it is comfort; it is the luxury of enjoyment.

4. *The world's condition demands it.* "That they all," &c. A divided church cannot convert the world. We must be united before we conquer; then, and then only, we shall prevail. We shall not silence the infidel, or assist the doubter, until we are united ourselves.

APPLICATION.

1. *The condition of the church is calculated to fill us with grief.* Weeping and sorrow might well fill our souls. The church of Rome—Puseyism, &c.

2. *This unity must be personal.* Associations, &c., can do little.

3. *Let us think of the unity of heaven.* No discord there; there all are one, &c.

THANKFULNESS.

"And be ye thankful."—Colossians iii. 15

We ask,

I. What is included in thankfulness?

1. *A right appreciation of the benefits God confers.* Think of his dignity, and of our unworthiness.

2. *A sincere value of the blessings bestowed.* Every gift of God should be prized.

3. *Fervent acknowledgment to God for his goodness to us.* The heart must move the tongue, "Open thou my lips," &c

The tongue never so truly well employed as in blessing God.

4. *Affectionate obedience to God for his benefits.* "What shall I render?" &c. He asks our hearts and lives.

II. ON WHAT GROUNDS SHOULD WE BE THANKFUL?

1. *Our relation to Deity.* His creatures—his dependents—his children.

2. *The mercies bestowed.* Temporal and spiritual. Life—preservation—privileges—redemption, &c. What are,

III. THE CONSIDERATIONS THAT SHOULD EXCITE TO THIS DUTY?

1. *Its reasonableness.* All creatures have some mode of expressing their delight. Harmony of the spheres; birds of the air, &c.; fields, rivers, winds, &c.; especially superior beings—seraphim, &c.

2. *Its pleasurableness.* Some duties painful; self-denial, &c. This luxurious; essence of joy—light of the soul, &c.

3. *Its profitableness.* Health of the soul. It gives vigor—pleases God, &c.

4. *Its durableness.* The very atmosphere of heaven. Will endure forever and ever.

JEHOVAH'S DESIGN WITH RESPECT TO HIS PEOPLE.

"This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise."—ISAIAH xliii. 21.

THE text refers to the seed of Jacob, the literal house of Israel. You are well aware how obviously it is true in reference to that nation. God resolved to deposite his truth and worship with one special people. Accordingly, he called Abraham to be the father of this nation, and he gave him many great and glorious promises, and formed his seed into a people for himself, that they might show forth, &c.; and as a nation, they did show forth, &c. In their laws, in their worship, in their deliverances, &c., they did show forth the praises of God. But on account of their apostacy God excluded them from their distinctive place as his elect, and diffused his goodness to the nations of the Gentiles. Thus the apostle speaks, Rom. xi. 17, 20; the church of Christ now enjoys the appellation of "The people of God." Whether Jews or Gentiles, or both, to them the text will appropriately apply, "This people," &c.

I. THE PEOPLE REFERRED TO. That is, the people of God, sometimes called saints, the righteous, the servants of God, the children of God, &c. Now of this people we notice,

1. *They are a saved people.* Not only redeemed, but saved. Christ is the "Saviour of all men, but especially of them," &c. The apostle says, "By grace are ye saved," &c. Not shall be, &c., but are, &c., see Titus iii. 5; 1 Cor. i. 18. They have felt the efficacy of divine grace; tasted and handled the things, &c.; have been delivered from the wrath to come; justified, renewed, adopted, and sanctified, &c.; saved from sin to righteousness, from darkness and sin into the knowledge, favor, love, and image of God.

2. *They are a peculiar people.* So they are described by the apostle. Not like others, they are not of the world, unlike the world, they are only pilgrims and sojourners. Hence their manners and customs, their costume and speech, their spirit and temper, their conduct and pursuits, are all peculiar to themselves; it must be so, it ought to be so, the opposite would be evil, &c. Now in addition to this,

3. *They are a distinct people.* There are many peculiar people in the world, who are yet of the world. But this people are distinct and separate. A people in the world, but unconnected in heart, in life, in conversation, in profession. Christ's army in a world which is in arms against him; Christ's vineyard in the waste-howling desert, &c.; Christ's disciples following his steps, &c.; crucified to the world, &c. Notice,

II. THE FORMATION SPECIFIED. "This people have I formed," &c. Consider,

1. *The nature of this formation.* Formed into a "people." God did not intend believers to be isolated beings, he designed they should be collected, united, a people. Hence they are likened to a family, flock, company of travellers, congregation or church, city, nation. Only in this way can they exercise their graces, &c.; exhibit Christianity in its social influences, and extend it in the world. Beautifully likened to the human body; 1 Cor. xii. 14, 20. Observe,

2. *The Author of this formation.* "I have formed," &c. It is divine, it is of God. The church is God's husbandry, God's building; he gives the same Spirit

so all, and a diversity of operation, that each may add to the comfort and prosperity of the whole. Hence the term, "The church of God." God's collecting, calling, saving, uniting, keeping, &c. Notice,

III. The end contemplated in this formation. "For myself," &c. God is the first cause, and the great end of all things. He could have existed alone, but it pleased him to form the universe, &c., he made all things for himself, &c. Now he has formed the church especially for himself. It is called his rest—his dwelling—his delight; and he designs that they "should show forth," &c. They do this,

1. *By exhibiting the effects of his gracious operations.* They are internally different, but this cannot be seen except by God, but its effects are seen, the fruit is different. "What fruit?" &c. "But now being made free," &c. "Took knowledge," &c. The sick whole, the lepers are now cleansed, curse a blessing, the dead alive, &c.—"They show forth," &c.

2. *By laboring to diffuse his glory.* They live and act for this, pray for it, &c. "Let the whole earth," &c. They seek the glory of God, in heart and life identified with it, &c.

3. *By pious resignation to the divine appointments.* Happy in affliction, calm in peril, peaceful in death. See how Job glorified God; see the apostles and first Christians; see every poor, and sorrowful, and dying Christian.

APPLICATION.

1. *Of what people are you personally a part? of the world or the church?*

2. *Let the people of God think of their high vocation, and the end of religion, "To show forth," &c.*

3. *God will be glorified in the punishment of the finally impenitent.*

ZION'S FUTURE PROSPERITY.

A MISSIONARY SKETCH.

"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."—Isaiah lxii. 1.

It is not quite clear whether the prophet is speaking in the text in his own name, or in the name of Jesus, the true Messiah and Head of his church. We rather view the text, however, as that of Isaiah, whose heart burned with holy zeal for the enlargement of the church, and the diffusion of the divine glory. But the sentiments uttered are truly worthy of all the servants of Jehovah, in every age of the world. Every faithful minister of Christ will earnestly appropriate the language of the prophet as his own, and exclaim, "For Zion's sake," &c. We would further ask, why should not the text be expressive of the feelings of every Christian? All who have tasted that the Lord is gracious—all who are identified with the progress of divine truth, and feel compassion for deathless souls, may well utter, with deepest emotion, the sentiment of the text, "For Zion's sake," &c. In this last and most extensive sense, we shall view this beautiful passage on this occasion. Observe,

I. The limited and obscure condition of the church implied. By Zion and Jerusalem, we understand the spiritual church and kingdom of God. The figures of the text involve the idea, that this church requires extension and additional glory. Now, what is the true state of the church of God, even in this late era of the world's history? We fear that the true church of Christ in all lands, including the professors of all Christian denominations, would not be more than twenty millions, and probably not so many. Of course, I do not reckon all the nominal Christians of the world. Of Mahommedans, there are about 160 millions; of Jews, nine or ten millions; and 700 or 800 millions of benighted, perishing pagans; while regions of the earth are yet dreary, sterile, and the very regions of death. Even in Europe, there are vast masses with only the flickering light of papal superstition, or the equally dim and sickly rays of the Greek church. Two thousand five hundred years have transpired since Isaiah penned the text, and yet what extensive domains of darkness and wo are still lying in the hands of the wicked one. Satan is yet the prince of this world. How circumscribed the church of God! How little is yet known of her spiritual power and glory! Even in the countries of her greatest prosperity, the majority of the people are at variance with her holy principles, and strangers to the felicity and blessings she confers. Observe,

II. The truly noble spirit averred. "I will not hold my peace," &c. "I will not rest." Here silence, and indolent inactivity are disavowed. How, then, can we speak and act for the extension of the righteousness and salvation of the gospel economy?

1. *The Christian minister can speak in the exercise of his public duties.* One part of our public work is to present to you the prophecies which relate to the travail of Christ's soul, and the subjugation of the world to his cross. His office is included in that commission which commanded the preaching of the gospel to every creature. It devolves upon him, therefore, to keep this subject in view; to dwell upon it in his ministrations; to unite the friends of Jesus in this great work. While he preaches and teaches Christ to those at home, he must ever remember the perishing millions abroad.

2. *Sabbath school teachers should impress this on the children of their charge.* The minister must act upon the generation that now is; the Sunday school teacher on the generation rising up—on those who are to be the pastors, deacons, and members of the church in the succeeding generation. The Sabbath school must be the nursery of the missionary spirit. It has already sent scores into the missionary field; and if well indoctrinated in the truths of universal philanthropy, it will be the army of reserve for extending the hallowed crusade of mercy and grace through the world.

3. *Parents should also train up their families in the missionary spirit.* It should form a part of household conversation; the condition, misery, and claims of the heathen should be early instilled into the mind of the young and rising generation; information from time to time should be imparted; their pity elicited, their compassion drawn forth, their generosity excited. Thus every Christian family, in its social character, should be enlisted on the side of missions.

4. *All Christians should speak with God in prayer.* In the short epitome of prayer left us by Christ, two petitions directly bear upon it: "Thy kingdom come," &c. It was predicted that the Redeemer's glory should engage the petitions of his pious followers. "Prayer shall be made for him continually." Now, our prayers should often embrace this great subject. We should plead, and supplicate, and wrestle with God; we should press our suit, urge our requests, &c.; be intent, and earnest and believing. We should remember what promises we have to plead—what reasons to incite us—what instances of success to cheer us; especially we should remember, how in our prayers we are one with God. His covenant, his engagement, both to Christ and his church, are most specific on this subject. Therefore he will hear and approve of our intercessions. But earnest prayer to God,

5. *Must be followed with corresponding activity.* "I will not rest." God will not convert the world by miracle, nor by the abstract influences of the Holy Spirit, but by the means which he connected with his kingdom at the beginning. "This gospel of the kingdom," &c. By the diffusion of the truth, &c. Did all the followers of Christ speak and pray only, it would necessarily be inefficient. Besides, without corresponding effort, it would be hypocrisy towards God, and a mockery of the heathen. Men must go into these dreary regions of the world; then they must be sent and supported; they must have Bibles, and tracts, and schools; then the church at home must be active and liberal. "If they descend into the mine," as Carey said, "those at home must hold the rope." If they go forth in the war, we must provide the ammunition; and those who do not this ought never to speak or pray about Christian missions—of course I mean if they have the least ability to help. Notice,

III. The reasons on which the magnanimous resolve of the text is grounded. "For Zion's sake." "For Jerusalem's sake." There are several reasons implied in the one avowed.

1. *For the sake of the God of Zion.* That his glory may fill the whole earth; his name be everywhere adored, his laws obeyed, and a revenue of praise from all his creatures be presented.

2. *For the sake of the King of Zion.* He has given Christ to be "Head over all things to his church." Christ is set as God's holy king in Zion. Now, the sorrows and sufferings of Christ were to be rewarded by universal empire; see Isaiah liii. 10, 11, "And I, if I be lifted up." Love to Christ, and sympathy with him, should excite us to say, "For Zion's sake," &c.

3. *For the sake of the church itself.* When the visions of prophecy are realized, then will be the jubilee of the church—her consummated glory—her final triumph. Do we not desire this? long for it? Has not the church been a peculiar blessing to us and our families? Should not gratitude, therefore, influence us? If not, let love of self do it; for the prosperity of Christ's kingdom involves in it our prosperity. We cannot speak, and labor, and give to the cause, without deriving incalculable blessings to our own souls.

APPLICATION.

Address,

1. *Those whose spirits harmonize with the prophet of old.* Who feel the emotions, and express their desires and resolutions as he did.

2. *Those who are not acting in concert with the text are so far at variance with the Redeemer.*

3. *The claims of missions are loud and comprehensive at the present period.* We live in the last times; our facilities are numerous; the openings of providence signally striking and wide. Let us not slumber, then, when the day is breaking, when the momentous triumphs of the cross must be close at hand, &c.

4. I might refer largely, and last of all —*To the truly miserable and pitiable condition of the heathen.*

JOY IN SORROW.

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."—2 Corinthians vi. 10.

The text, and the whole paragraph, refer to the apostles, and the first preachers of the gospel. In it we see the toil, and suffering, and peril to which the ambassadors of Jesus were first exposed. Several portions of the passage are presented in the way of paradox, &c., see verse 9, &c. The text is equally applicable to all the disciples of Christ, in every age of the world. Of all such it may be said, "As sorrowful," &c. Let us look at several particulars in which the text is especially exemplified. It is true,

I. In respect to the adverse and afflictive scenes of life. This world to the Christian is a valley of tears—a howling wilderness—a stormy ocean; many things to disappoint and try the Christian. The ordinary troubles of life, in which they share with their fellow-men; peculiar afflictions to which they are liable as Christians. Now these are *many*. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." "It is through much tribulation," &c. These often involve the friends of Jesus in sorrow —often cast down and dispirited on account of the way; but in these there is cause for constant rejoicing.

(1.) Their afflictions are limited and light.

(2.) Their enjoyments numberless.

(3.) Their support constant and efficient.

(4.) Their trials salutary and useful.

(5.) Prospect of a world where they shall be for ever unknown.

"When I can read my title clear," &c

II. Often sorrowful on account of their own imperfections and infirmities as Christians. So little light; so little confidence; such a wavering hope; so little strength; so often turned aside from the path of duty; so listless in devotion; so unfruitful, &c. Now these are real causes of sorrow to the sincere Christian. But even here there are *reasons for always rejoicing.*

(1.) That there is the least genuine grace.

(2.) That God is so condescending and tender. "As a Father," &c. "He knoweth," &c.

(3.) That Christ sympathizes and intercedes for us.

"He knows what sore temptations mean,
For he has felt the same."

(4.) That there are provisions of grace to meet all our need.

(5.) That there is a fountain always opened, and the promise, "If we confess," &c.

III. Often sorrowful, when anticipating the solemnities of death and judgment. The Christian recognises his stewardship, &c. He knows he must die, and give an account. When his Lord calleth, he will have to surrender it up. There is, too, the act of dying, and the reality of judgment. Feeling his unprofitableness he dreads, and perhaps almost despairs; fears the ordeal and the issue. But we should always rejoice, for,

(1.) Dying grace is pledged; and never

has the pledge been broken, and the soul deserted.

(2.) Death is a conquered servant, not a reigning tyrant.

(3.) The Judge is our brother and our friend. Reverse the text. Sinners rejoice, and yet are really sorrowful.

IV. Often sorrowful on account of our connections in life. Those who have tasted of the grace of God cannot be indifferent to their relatives and friends. So far from this, they long and pray for their salvation. How often they see no hope of their desires being granted! Perhaps enemies, mockers, or careless, &c.; entirely indifferent. Now this is a cause of sorrow. Yet there are some grounds of rejoicing:—

(1.) We are only responsible for the use of means.

(2.) While mercies and privileges are continued there is hope.

(3.) All our friends and kindred are not in this state.

V. Often sorrowful in reference to the church of Christ. So little real, abiding good effected; so many only have a name; so many very occasional in regard to the means, &c.; so many not using their energies for the weal of sinners; so many who go back; so few full of hope, and faith, and zeal, and good works. Yet here we may also rejoice that,

(1.) There are some who do honor to religion; who love the ordinances; who are full of love and the Holy Ghost; who are ripening for a better world.

(2.) Some who are useful, and consistent, and persevering.

(3.) That the Lord is very good to his people, and fills his poor unworthy servants with all needful good, &c.; and that he will not cast them off, nor forsake, for his name's sake.

VI. Often sorrowing on account of the world—those who are without. Whose eyes are grieved for the transgressors; whose eyes weep, because men keep not God's law. "Oh! that the wickedness of the wicked," &c. Yet, we rejoice to see so many blessed institutions for the young, for the poor, for the ignorant, for benighted neighborhoods, for the intemperate, &c.; and that some good is done, some are converted, &c. One such instance is precious *beyond the value of he world.*

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the mixed state of the present world.* Light and darkness, joy and fear, &c.

2. *Seek supremely a better world.*

3. *Look for the mercy of God.* "Be dili gent," &c.

HEAVEN UPON EARTH.

"As the days of heaven upon earth."—Deut xi. 21.

We often speak of heaven; the way to it is by evangelical obedience to God's word. Often we desire heaven: we need not wait till we die to enjoy it, we may have heaven now, heaven in our hearts.

> "The men of grace have found,
> Glory begun below;
> Celestial fruit on earthly ground,
> From faith and hope may grow."

Let me call your attention,

I. To the literal realization of the text. "The days of heaven upon earth" were enjoyed by our first parents in Eden. Paradise was a striking type of heaven. So heaven is called, and we read of its streams, and of its tree of life.

1. *Paradise was the region of purity, and so is heaven.* It is the holy city. Nothing that defileth can enter into it.

2. *Paradise was the abode of honor and dignity, and such is heaven.* All there are ennobled, dignified. Possess dominion, glory, and honor.

3. *Paradise was the scene of happy communion, and such is heaven.* Angels, and God himself conversed and held intercourse with our first parents, and saints and angels have one blest and endless communion in heaven.

4. *Paradise was the seat of delightful pleasures, and such is heaven.* There are the rivers of pleasure. Oceans of delight. Fulness of joys, and pleasures for evermore. Paradise indeed was strikingly typical of the heavenly world. Let me now call your attention,

II. To the spiritual realization of the text. Now this is enjoyed by the members of Christ's mystical and spiritual church. Observe,

(1.) The gospel dispensation is called the kingdom, or reign of heaven. "Re

pent ye," &c. Thus he says the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. To Peter he said, "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Observe,

(2.) The description given of the gospel church, as contrasted with the old dispensation, is exceedingly interesting and appropriate, Heb. xii. 18–24. Now it is in the true spiritual church of Christ, that we have the days of heaven upon earth.

1. *We have a heavenly king.* He came down from heaven. He is Lord of heaven. The light and glory of heaven. Is worshipped and adored by all the hosts, &c.

2. *We have heavenly blessings.* The calling is called a heavenly calling, Heb. iii. 1. "Heavenly gifts," Heb. vi. 4. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," Eph. i. 3.

(1.) Divine peace is the peace of heaven; and this peace Christ gives to all his disciples. "My peace I give," &c. "The peace of God," &c.

(2.) Our joys are heavenly. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Peter i. 8.

(3.) All our supplies are heavenly. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," James i. 17. All the holy influences of the Spirit descend from heaven. Our bread is from heaven, and the streams of which we drink flow from between the throne of God and the Lamb.

3. *We have heavenly communion.* Every exercise connected with Christian fellowship is heavenly.

(1.) Prayer is the united flame of devotion ascending to heaven.

(2.) Praise is the grateful incense arising and mingling with the ascriptions of the heavenly hosts.

(3.) At Christ's table we feed upon the bread of heaven, and eat together of the true manna which descends from heaven. How appropriate the lines of the poet.

> "Happy the souls to Jesus join'd,
> And saved by grace alone;
> Walking in all his ways, they find
> Their heaven on earth begun."

4. *We have heavenly delights and anticipations.* How often have we enjoyed the Spirit as an earnest or first-fruits of the heavenly inheritance! How often experienced the rapture of Peter, "Lord, it is good to be here." How often had some of the kindred feelings of Paul's ecstasy, "Whether in the body, or out of the body," &c. How often felt raised almost up to heaven, until the imagination has seemed to behold the gates and the scenery of the new Jerusalem! We have exclaimed, "This is none other than the house of God," &c. How often would we have given the preference to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord! Surely these are as the days of heaven upon earth. Observe,

III. THE FUTURE GLORIOUS REALIZATION OF THE TEXT. This earth is not to be Satan's seat forever. Not the scene of sin and wo and the curse forever; not to be the grave-yard of the redeemed forever; it is destined to a glorious renovation. To be lifted up from the degradation of the curse. To be the seat of moral loveliness, and become the garden of the Lord. To cease being the walk of prowling beasts of prey, and become the abode of the innocent and the happy; to cease to be the field of blood, and become the land of peace, when the nations shall not learn war any more, and when nothing shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them; and the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Isaiah xi. 6–9. "Violence shall no more be heard in the land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise. The sun shall be thy light no more by day; neither for brightness," &c

(1.) Now, all this is certain, because it hath been pledged in the solemn covenant of the Father with the Son.

(2.) It is certain, for it is written in the

unalterable volume of truth, that "the whole earth shall be filled," &c.

(3.) It is certain, for the beginning of the conquests have been achieved, and now, "He who hath many crowns upon his head, is going forth from victory to victory." Now by way of application, we ask, How may we contribute to bring about the blissful consummation?

1. *We must become the subjects of heavenly grace.* Every converted soul is one restored to the heavenly reign of Jesus. So much sin and misery blotted out; a source of evil stopped, and a source of good opened. The image and spirit of the wicked one are erased, and the image and spirit of God exhibited. Now this is the first step, then,

2. *We must exhibit heavenly graces and dispositions.* Where we move we must try to produce a heavenly atmosphere, heavenly influence, the holiness of heaven. We must reflect the goodness of heaven, we must diffuse the kindness and mercy of heaven.

3. *We must devote all our energies and means to promote heavenly institutions.* There are two mighty interests contending for the supremacy, for the universal triumph. It is not difficult to see on what side the various institutions are allied. We know the tree by its fruits. There is the preaching of the gospel; there are meetings for prayer; there are tract and visiting societies; there are Bible and missionary societies. Now are we giving all the weight of our influence to these institutions? Are we supporting and praying for them? All can do the latter. "Thy kingdom come." Do we internally long for it? By the employment of means, shall there be as the days of heaven upon earth.

4. *You are all contributing to, or hindering the coming of Christ's kingdom.* Which is your position? How are you acting? Let us see how we really stand before God.

PRESENCE OF GOD IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE.

"But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him."—HABAKKUK ii. 20.

THE feelings of the mind are necessarily differently impressed by the circumstances in which we are placed, and the scenery by which we are surrounded. Go to the house of social festivity, and there joy and gladness are the only elements which will appear appropriate or be excited by it. Go to the house of mourning, and how very apposite the sentiments, and the emotions felt! Go to the house of legislature, there the interests of the nation, the efficiency of statesmen, and the principles of politics, necessarily engross the mind. Go to the hall of science, and there the wonders of nature, and the productions of art, lead us to the heights of admiration, or into the depths of profound inquiry. Go to the court of justice, and see human nature degraded in fetters, exiled, or doomed to death; and another class of feelings differing from all the preceding are produced. Go to the palace of royalty, enter the throne-room, see the splendid equipage and dazzling trappings of earthly greatness, &c. Envy or ambition, and thoughts of human grandeur, will have the ascendency. I desire to introduce you into an assembly, more deeply interesting, instructive, and solemn, and yet more elevating than any of these; it is the temple of Jehovah—the house of the living God. That to which the text refers, "But the Lord is in his," &c. There is a threefold temple inhabited by Jehovah. The heaven of heavens; the temple seen by Isaiah and John, &c.; the temple of the sanctified heart. "With that man," &c. "Know ye not that ye are the temple," &c. The assembly of his saints. "Wherever two or three," &c. To the last our attention will be confined.

I. WHAT THE DECLARATION IMPLIES.
II. THE DESIGNS OF HIS PRESENCE.
III. THE IMPRESSION IT SHOULD PRODUCE.

I. WHAT THE DECLARATION IMPLIES. It does not limit the divine presence. The heaven of heavens cannot contain him. He fills immensity. "Whither," &c. His spirit pervades all creation; but it refers to the especial presence of God in the rich condescensions of his grace. God is there by the ubiquity of his nature; but he is there especially,

1. *By the revelations of his mind.* The assembly of saints is to be the pillar and ground of truth. Here the word of God is deposited. Anciently in the ark were the two tables of the law. Now the law and the prophets, and the gospels, and the letters of the apostles—the completed

canon of truth. Now here is God's mind, and will, and purpose. His statutes and blessings, &c. Just as the sovereign is often said to be, where his will is proclaimed, &c.

2. *God is present by his ordinances.* The ordinance of praise respects him, and recognises him as near. So adoration and prayer, so baptism and the supper. These have his impress upon them.

3. *God is present by the power of his Spirit.* The Spirit is the gift of Christ to the church. "I will send the Spirit of truth," &c. "He shall abide," &c. "God is a spirit," and must be worshipped as such, &c.

II. The designs of his presence.

1. *The design of inspection.* He tries the heart and the reins; he examines the motives, &c.; he observes the conduct, the expressions, the thoughts; he sees who sincerely bows the knee, &c. His eyes see all, and all perfectly.

2. *The design of gracious assistance.* He is present to help his people—to calm—to enlighten—to incite—to open the heart and lips, &c. To impart the hallowed fire to our souls, &c. To open the ear, and loosen the tongue, &c.

3. *The design of seasonable consolation.* God has engaged to comfort his people "in Jerusalem." "Even as a mother," &c. "Comfort ye, comfort ye," &c. A sense of sin is felt, &c. The mind depressed, &c. Trouble encountered, &c. God listens to their plaints and moans; he hears the cry of his people, and imparts seasonable consolation.

4. *The design of effectual co-operation.* God allows us to be considered co-workers with himself: but our labors will effect nothing without his blessing. He gives efficacy to all means—to prayer, to preaching, &c. As the means involve the conversion of souls, the establishment of saints, and the furtherance of the gospel, the Lord is present to secure, by his Holy Spirit, these great and momentous ends. Then in reference to the divine presence, we ask:

III. What impressions should it produce?

1. *Reverential awe.* "Let all the earth keep silence." Can divine worship be too reverently regarded and conducted? Is it reverent to come in late; to rush in so as to disturb; to gaze about—to be listless—to sleep—to cover the head before you get out—to talk about worldly things at the door &c., &c. We forget that "the Lord is in his holy temple," &c. It should produce,

2. *Devout preparation.* We go to meet the Deity, to see him by faith—to hear him speak—to speak to him—to be blessed, &c. Then we should prepare, so as to be collected, quiet, thoughtful, &c. "Take off thy shoes," &c.

3. *Deep spiritual humility.* If God is in his temple, then he alone should be exalted. As all the stars disappear from our vision before the rising sun, so God is the great Sun of righteousness, &c. The people are as nothing, but dust, &c. The minister, &c. God all in all. How abased and lowly we should be! We should bow down and worship. Body and mind should be prostrated before him.

4. *Great encouragement.* We cannot fail in our object. Every good can be obtained, every evil avoided. God possesses an infinite fulness of blessedness for his people. Other things may fail—friends absent—minister not equal to his usual state, &c., but God is in his holy temple, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the dignity of Christian worship.* To come immediately before God, &c.

2. *The value of a mediator.* We need a days-man, an intercessor, &c.

3. *The importance of revelation.* To know how to come, &c.

4. *The value of the Spirit.* To assist our infirmities, and help in every time of need.

THE GRACIOUS END OF CHRIST'S MISSION INTO OUR WORLD.

"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—Luke xix. 10.

The mission of Jesus to our world was associated with astounding wonders and inexplicable mysteries. Never in any respect was there any thing like it. Warriors have visited countries, but their footsteps have been marked with blood, and their career with misery and death; travellers have explored distant regions, but their object has been to discover the wonders of nature, or monuments of art; philanthropists have occasionally gone forth on errands of humanity and mercy, and have

given of their profusion to the sons and daughters of misery; but Jesus, the blessed Messiah, came into our world to bear the fetters, to submit to the shame, and to endure death for a race of guilty rebels, and by suffering, concentrated in his own person, what they deserved, to seek and to save that which was lost. Let us briefly advert,

I. To the distinguished personage referred to. "The Son of Man." And here we are led to consider the incarnation of the Son of God. Jesus is often described as the Son of God, Lord of Glory, &c. But as Mediator, it behooved him to assume the nature of man; and thus it is written, "God sent forth his Son," not in his essential and glorious form, but "made of a woman," &c. Hence he took upon himself not the nature of angels, but was of the seed of Abraham. Several reasons why Jesus became the Son of man:—

1. *As Mediator, he must be interested in both parties.* Hence he was God with God, and man with man.

2. *That he might suffer and die for man.* The divine nature could not suffer.

3. *That as kinsman, he might have right to present himself a ransom, &c.* Here the same nature suffers that had sinned, and was condemned.

4. *That he might be an example to his people.* Enduring their infirmities; living, &c., with the same nature, in the same world.

5. *That he might sympathize with them as their great and tender High Priest, &c., in heaven.*

II. Notice the embassy of the Son of Man. "The Son of Man came." Three questions will elucidate this:—

1. *From whence did he come?* He came from heaven, the palace-royal of Jehovah; from the throne of the Father; the glory of the celestial state. He had ever been with the Father; was as one brought up with him; by him had all things been created, &c. He was the first-begotten of God—the first-born of every creature—the delight and fellow of the Father—the righteous Lord, and heir of all things; he came from the heaven of heavens.

2. *Where did the Son of Man come to?* He came to this fallen, benighted, and miserable world; a world in a state of sinful revolt, misery, and death. What condescension! What grace! How he abased himself, &c. He made his footstool his dwelling-place; he came not on a transitory visit, but to be a citizen of it; to live in it for more than thirty years.

3. *In what manner did he come?* Not with regal pomp; not with a train of celestial attendants; not in grandeur; not to dwell in its palaces, &c. A poor village was his birth-place; a poor virgin his mother; a stable his first residence. He took upon him the form of a servant; he came not to be waited upon, and ministered unto, but to be the servant of servants.

III. The great end of the Saviour's advent. "He came to seek," &c. Now, here is a distinct reference to the state of the human family. "Lost." Not in the absolute sense; not irrevocably. Some emblems may assist us here.

1. *Look at that sheep which has left the fold.* It is straying on the dark and distant mountains, exposed to every beast of prey. Such was our state. "All we like sheep," &c. We never should have returned; we should have wandered on, in endless mazes lost.

2. *Look at the mariner.* His vessel has driven against the hidden shoal—has become a total wreck; he has escaped to the summit of a barren rock. Is he not lost? He cannot long survive—cannot recross the trackless deep. Such the state of man.

3. *Look at that sickly, wretched being.* The leprosy has spread its desolating foulness through the whole system; no remedy, &c.; the disease is deepening and spreading. Is he not lost? So man became defiled. "From the crown of the head," &c.

4. *Look at that malefactor.* He has committed some capital offence—has been tried, convicted, condemned. Is he not lost? He is in the eye of the law a dead man. So sin had involved us in guilt, and brought us under condemnation; the black curse of eternal death hovered over our miserable world. Thus, brethren, we were lost. Now, the end of Christ's mission was to seek and to save that which was lost. As the kind shepherd, he followed the straying sheep, &c.; he traversed the dreary mountains, &c., and prepared a fold for his straying flock; he visited the desolate mariner on the rock, and brought close to him the life-boat of salvation, and freely offered to conduct him to the regions of bliss, and shores of immortality; he came to our hos-

pital world, and brought a balm—the balm of health and life—to heal the leper, &c.; he came to the condemned prisoner—took his place—bore his doom—died in his stead—suffered the just for the unjust, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Herein we see the condition of all men by nature.* A condition from which the grace of God hath provided deliverance.

2. *Are you found of Christ?* Restored—saved.

3. *The incorrigible wanderer will be lost forever.*

4. *Now urge the acceptance of Christ upon all present.*

CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

"I am the light of the world."—JOHN viii. 12.

OF all the material creatures which God has made, light is the fairest and most striking emblem of himself. God is light—the Father of lights, and in him is no darkness at all. Light is also one of the metaphorical titles of the Redeemer, and with John it was a favorite comparison. In him "as the Word," or Logos, "was life, and the life was the light of men." Jesus also adopts the same expression in reference to himself, "I am the light of the world." The emblem is exceedingly appropriate on account of the purity of light, on account of the joy which it diffuses, but chiefly as it is the source of manifestation. By it all things are discerned; without it, yet having the organs of sight, we perceive nothing. Jesus is the great Sun of the universe—the fountain of light and life. We observe, then, that light is the emblem of life; and,

I. HE IS THE LIGHT OF BEING TO ALL HIS CREATURES. Light is the symbol of life—darkness of death. The state of things before his creative power was exerted was dark and void, and light was the first creature he spake into being. It is probable that the light of existence is as extensive as the universe—that everywhere living beings exist. Throughout all his animated works, he is the light. He gave life to every thing, and he holds the life of every creature in his hands. In him all things live and move, &c.; the glow-worm and the man, the insect and the angel, the imperceptible animalcule and the seraph. Light is the emblem of knowledge, and,

II. HE IS THE LIGHT OF INTELLIGENCE TO ALL RATIONAL BEINGS. He has given each the instinct or reason best fitted to its nature, &c. He has endowed the mind of man with all its lofty powers; with understanding, judgment, memory, and all the capacities with which it is ennobled. The still greater, clearer, and more elevated powers of angels are all conferred by him. Light is the emblem of joy and gladness, and,

III. HE IS THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL. As a revelation of God's mind; it is called the glorious gospel of the blessed God, because it is irradiated by the beams of the Son of God. He brought life and immortality to light. Take Christ away, and we have no gospel. What was the condition of the world when Christ was not known? Dark! dark! Darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the minds of the people so dark that neither philosophy, nor science nor literature could remove it. In this benighted condition, man could obtain no certain knowledge,

1. *As to the true God.* Hence the whole scene of idolatry; hence the unnumbered deities. Every thing was appealed to, and worshipped by some as God; sun—moon—stars—the sea—rivers—the wind—fowls of the air—beasts—fishes—creeping things. Hence, too, idols formed of wood, and stone, and clay, &c. Christ revealed the true and living God. "No man hath seen God," &c. As the Father of mercies, and the fountain of compassion, tenderness, and love. The world was dark,

2. *As to human sin and misery.* And Christ made this manifest; and he presented himself in contrast to the world, a perfectly holy being; but, most of all, he showed how they could be pardoned and removed—how the guilty could be forgiven and delivered from it. So dark were mankind, that they had adopted cruel rites to obtain this. He presented the Father, and the returning prodigal; the publican, &c.; himself as a sacrifice for sin. The world was dark,

3. *As to the supreme good.* Some had looked for this in pleasure, some in knowledge, &c. Christ showed that it consisted in the enjoyment of the love of God; a right state of heart towards God and towards

men; in one word, "Love." Dwelling in love, &c. The world was dark,

4. *As to futurity.* The state of departed spirits he revealed. Heaven of bliss—hell of wo; eternal life, and eternal death; also as to the body, its resurrection by the mighty power of God. We observe, light is the emblem of hope, and,

IV. CHRIST IS THE LIGHT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S CHARACTER AND EXPECTATIONS. "God who commanded," &c. He has opened their eyes, and now they see; he has given them day—the day of salvation; he is in them as their light. "The day star hath arisen in their hearts." Once darkness, now light, &c.

> "He is our soul's bright morning star,
> And he our rising sun."

Light is the medium of beauty, and,

V. HE IS THE LIGHT OF THE CHURCH. The language of Isaiah may be applied to the church, "Arise! shine," &c. The church is not in darkness, but in light. The church is a city set upon a hill; all her light is from Christ. He is the sun—the centre of all her light and glory: he reflects his glory upon her; he bespangles her firmament with the stars of his right hand, &c.; he causes the spirit of light and comfort to dwell within her; and the course of his church is to be increasingly radiant and glorious, until the light of the moon be as the light of the sun, &c., and the whole earth be filled with her glory. Light is the emblem of glory, and,

VI. HE IS THE LIGHT OF HEAVEN. Rev. xxi. 23. On Tabor, the apostles were overwhelmed with his effulgent rays, &c.; but in heaven he shines forth infinitely brighter than the sun; illumines the celestial temple, so that there is no night there.

APPLICATION.

1. *How many are in darkness!* Of ignorance—sin—unbelief. Christ is the light of the world. Why tarry far off? Why remain children of night and darkness? &c. Awake, &c.

2. *According to our fellowship with Christ will be the Christian's light.* Nearness to Christ, and we have light, hope, joy, &c. Labor,

3. *To bring others to the light.* Every Christian should feel that,

> "'Tis all his business here below
> To cry, Behold the Lamb!"

REVERENCE CLAIMED FOR CHRIST.

"Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son."—MARK xii. 6.

OUR subject relates immediately to the Jews, and their rejection and murder of the Messiah. It also directs our attention to God's judicial dealings with them as a nation, and the election of the Gentiles to their privileges and blessings. The Saviour also here predicts, or rather applies an ancient prediction to himself; see verse 10, "And have ye not read?" &c. Our present design is the consideration of the words of our text as they will properly apply to us. Observe, then,

I. THE DIGNIFIED CHARACTER OF CHRIST. "God's well-beloved Son." This representation presents Jesus to us,

1. *In his divine nature.* God's one Son. Angels are called sons of God; saints are the sons of God; but Jesus is God's one Son—a Son in a very different sense to angels or saints; for to which of the angels did he ever say, "Thou art my Son," &c. For when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, &c., Heb. i. 5, &c. Christ, as the Son of God, possesses a oneness of nature with the Father, "I and the Father are one." "Whoso hath seen me hath seen the Father," &c. He also possesses an equality of glory, &c. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, &c. He is over all, God blessed for evermore. His name, his power, his dignity, &c., are supremely pre-eminent. Observe, Christ is placed before us,

2. *As the object of the Father's delight.* "His well-beloved." It is written, "The Father loveth the Son," &c. Thus did Isaiah prophesy, xlii. 1. At his baptism, God proclaimed his love when the heavens were opened, &c. "This is my beloved Son," &c. This was repeated at his transfiguration; see also in Christ's sacerdotal prayer, John xvii. 24. Notice,

II. THE MISSION OF CHRIST. "He sent him also." God had sent his prophets and ministering servants to teach, to warn, and reveal his will to his people; but, last of all, he sent his Son.

1. *From whence?* From his own bosom. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." He enjoyed inexpressible glory and joy with the Father before the world was; but from

heaven's dignity and bliss he was sent forth, and came down to us.

2. *To whom was he sent?* To a world of sinners. First of all, to his own; to the Jews, the seed of Abraham; to the house of Israel; but also with an express design for the benefit of the world.

3. *For what was he sent?* To be the Saviour of the world; to restore men to the favor, image, and enjoyment of God.

(1.) He came to destroy the works of the devil, and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth.

(2.) He was sent to illumine a dark world by the doctrines of the gospel.

(3.) To recover an alienated world by his power and grace.

(4.) To redeem an accursed world by his death upon the cross.

(5.) And to purify a polluted world by his spirit and blood. It was an embassy of pure, infinite, inconceivable love and grace.

III. The reverence God demands on behalf of his Son. He said, they will reverence my Son, i. e. treat him with deference, with supreme respect; give him their obedience. Let us ascertain,

1. *The manner in which this reverence should be evinced*

(1.) By adoring love of his person. This is what angels give him. "Worthy the Lamb," &c. How rapturously David wrote and sang, Psalm xlv. 1, 2.

(2.) By cheerful obedience to his authority. Christ must be regarded in his princely authority. No reverence without obedience—the cheerful obedience of the heart. When one said, "Thy mother and thy brethren are without," he said, "Whoso doeth the will," &c.

(3.) By studious imitation of his example. He hath left us an example, "My sheep hear my voice." If we say that we have received him, we should walk as he also walked.

(4.) By ardent zeal for his glory; making Christ's interest our own; living to spread his name and praise; seeking the prosperity of his kingdom and cause in the world; having one heart with Christ in all his spiritual designs.

2. *The grounds of this reverence.* They are very many.

(1.) Think of the glory of his person. The supreme God; the King of kings; Jehovah of hosts; the ruler of the universe.

(2.) Contemplate the purity of his character. The source of perfect holiness; light, and beauty, and perfection of Christ; not one spot or frailty; the Holy One of Israel.

(3.) The riches of his grace. Not only purity, but purity embodied in love, in goodness. Mercy is the radiant bow of his throne; mercy, that has astonished heaven; mercy, infinite, boundless, eternal. Herein is love, that he laid down his life, &c.

(4.) The preciousness of his benefits. By reverencing him we enjoy his favor, love, communion, spirit, grace, and glory.

(5.) The terribleness of his wrath; see it in the history of the Jews, and read Psalm ii. 11, &c. Rev. vi. 12.

APPLICATION.

1. *Address sinners.* Rejection of Christ will involve you in endless wrath and ruin.

2. *Saints.* Aver your reverence for Christ. Not only cherish it, but exhibit it. Fearlessly profess him before men, and ever live to the glory of his name.

GOD'S CALL TO THE SLEEPER.

"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."—Ephesians v. 14.

Various are the similitudes employed in scripture to describe the state of the sinner. He is represented as an alien, a rebel, an outcast, a captive; as diseased, blind, wretched, and lost. He is spoken of as deceived and perishing. Our text describes him as asleep, and also dead. Let us consider,

I. The sinner's awful state.
II. God's gracious call.
III. The great promise.

I. The sinner's awful state. Asleep and dead, or perhaps the Spirit designs the sleep as the sleep of death, a deadly sleep, a sleep tending to death. Now this deadly sleep is characterized by the following striking symptoms.

1. *It is a state of darkness.* In sleep the organs of vision are closed; there may be the rays of light, the beauties of nature, &c., but they are not seen. Such is the condition of the soul, in a state of darkness; without true and saving knowledge; ignorant of himself, of God, and of the

things that belong to his peace. He has the capacity, and there is the revelation, the light of the gospel shining, but he sits in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

2. *It is a state of insensibility.* Asleep, the person hears not, enjoys not; he is temporarily dead to all around him. Such is the state of the sinner; he hearkens not to God; he enjoys him not; a thousand blessings are near him, but he has no taste nor desire for them.

3. *A state of inactivity.* In sleep all the limbs are at ease; no desires formed; no plans laid out; no work effected. Such is the state of the sinner as to all moral and spiritual labor. He labors not for the bread, &c.; he agonizes not for the crown; he strives not for the goal; he works not out his salvation; he flees not from the wrath, &c.; he walks not in the way of holiness; he prepares not to meet his God.

4. *A state of illusion.* Sleep is the season of dreams, of vain and vapid imaginations. How striking these dreams often are! how vivid! how like reality, truth, yet all illusive. A state of sin is one of illusive dreams. Afflicted with the plague of sin, yet they dream of health; poor, dream of riches; debased, of dignities; wretched, yet dream of bliss and joy; condemned and in the way of ruin, yet dream of heaven and eternal life; life ebbing, they dream of years to come. Who can describe the dreams of sin and sinners?

5. *A state of peril.* Asleep, they are no longer able to watch and defend themselves. Now the horrid assassin and murderer wend their cruel way to shed blood. How many have slept only to awake in eternity; so also from accidents, fire, storms, &c.; also from disease and sudden death. So exposed is the sinner; exposed every moment to the just displeasure of God; thus while Belshazzar was feasting; thus while the rich fool was planning; thus while Herod was deified.

6. *This sleep is a state of disease.* Not natural and healthy sleep, but the result of disease, the effect of moral depravity. Hence it becomes more profound, more universal, more unexcitable, till it terminates in eternal death. Sleep of death, ending in death everlasting. From this state men never awake themselves. Observe,

II. God's gracious call. It is God speaking in the text, and he is speaking in mercy with a view to our salvation. Not as he will speak at the last day, when his voice will awake the dead, and shake the universe. God thus calls,

1. *By the various circumstances and events of life.* Often by adversity—by affliction—by bereavements—by the example and advice of friends—by instances of his displeasure, sudden deaths, &c.

2. *By his blessed word.* By the word written and preached. Most read or hear it read, and how it describes our state, &c.; how it calls to repentance, &c.; how it urges salvation. But especially by the preaching of the word. The minister goes forth expressly to warn, arouse, and exhort. Have you not been called hundreds, yea, thousands of times? "If any man have ears," &c.

3. *God calls by the admonitions of conscience.* Who has not felt the inward conviction, the inward rebuke, the inward warning? &c. Now thus God calls men, but to what?

(1.) To awake; to shake off the lethargy; to arouse themselves; to exercise their powers; "Consider your ways," &c. To reflect, &c.

(2.) To arise from the dead; to forsake the position of sleep and death; the company and state of the dead, &c. Illustrate it by a person who has taken some powerful opiate; or some one who has been overcome by intense cold, and where sleep would be death. Now power is ever given to obey.

III. The great promise. "Christ shall give thee light."

1. *The blessing promised is light.*

(1.) The light of saving knowledge.

(2.) Of true peace and joy by the forgiveness of sin.

(3.) Of holiness. "A new heart," &c. Become a child of light, &c.

2. *The source of the blessing is Christ.* Christ is appointed to this. It is his work, &c. In the days of his flesh, &c. To many here. Whosoever cometh, &c.

3. *The manner of its bestowment.* "Shall *give*." All his blessings are gifts. Free, rich, meritless, suit all cases, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *We call upon the sinner to awake.* Now; in earnest.

2. *Warn the Christian against lethargy* "Let us not sleep as do others," &c

ON STRIVING WITH GOD.

"Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker."—Isaiah xlv. 9.

The sinner is variously represented in the writings of this holy book. The idea of rebellion is one of frequent recurrence. A sinner rebels against God's authority and dominion. The sinner is frequently styled an enemy, and this is evident both from his heart, and tongue, and life. The heart is in a state of enmity, &c.—the tongue impiously exclaiming, "Depart from us, for we desire not," &c., and wicked works distinguish the ungodly man. Very frequently the sinner is described as fighting against God, or contending with him, and this is the idea of the text, "Wo unto him," &c. Let us notice,

I. The manifestation of this strife.
II. The evils of such a course.
III. The final results.

I. The manifestation of this strife. To strive is to oppose, and in a variety of ways sinners exhibit opposition to God. There is,

1. *The unblushing opposition of infidelity.* Nothing can exhibit more daring wickedness than infidelity—denying God. Excluding his existence or government from his own world. To say there is no God! or to affect to say so, or to reduce him to an indifferent spectator of his works and creatures. In connection with infidelity there is the rejection of the scriptures, and boasting of the sufficiency of nature to teach us virtue and religion. What part of nature? Or what can we know of moral right, &c.—of evil? &c. Apply this to truth, to honesty—to prayer, &c. It is all mockery, you might as soon expect a child to learn to speak by hearing the winds. No! the rejecter of the Bible will not find another oracle of truth in the universe. How devoted this class of individuals are in prosecuting their work! How eager to dissuade others from their adherence to the Christian religion!

2. *The fearless transgressions of the bold and daring in iniquity.* Those who drink in iniquity as an ox, &c. Who lay aside all the restrictions of conscience and the respect of the virtuous around them. Who give themselves up to every evil way and work. Whose language is filthy and brutal. Who have no fear, nor shame, nor sense of their responsibility, and who are in fact demonized by habitual sins.

3. *Those who resist the providential dealings and interpositions of God for their salvation.* Providence subserves the designs of grace. The movements of the divine government are often full of instruction—often act as warnings and beacons. Adversity, sickness, and bereavements are often employed to lead to thought and consideration, to reflection, repentance, and personal religion. The resistance of these is striving against God. If these do not soften they harden. Some metals melt while others harden in the furnace. God hedges up the way of some, that in their afflictions they may seek him; if they do not, they must break through and fight against him.

4. *Those who will not yield to the overtures of the gospel.* The gospel proclaims men enemies, and seeks their return to friendship; traitors, &c.; wanderers, &c.; and urges, "Be ye reconciled to God." "Agree," &c. "Be at peace," &c. The gospel proclaims an amnesty; but of course it is on the principle of throwing down their weapons and ceasing to strive and rebel. Whoso persists in unbelief strives against God—yea, against the riches of his grace.

II. The evils of such a course.

1. *It is full of infatuation.* It cannot be vindicated upon the principle of reason or propriety. It is evidently a sign of the mind being blinded by the wicked one. Either the faculties of the understanding and judgment are in entire darkness, or they are wofully perverted. There cannot be greater madness or more complete folly than to strive against God.

2. *It is fraught with evils to our own souls.* It acts negatively in excluding the greatest blessings God has to bestow. "Your sins have withholden good things," &c. It excludes the divine favor, peace of conscience, and a hope of immortality. It deprives us of all the rich communications of heaven. Besides, it acts positively to our injury. It degrades the mind, it hardens the heart, it sears the conscience, it fills with fear. "The wicked flee," &c. It converts conscience into a gnawing worm. It often makes life insupportable, and drives to delirium or to despair.

3. *It is full of ingratitude.* Look at the child that despises and treats irreverently his parent. How you feel indignation to

rise, &c. That child is the sinner who strives against his Maker. Look at that befriended individual who calumniates and seeks the ruin of his patron and benefactor—conspires against his property and life. Look at that ransomed slave who unites with the bloodthirsty enemies of his benefactor, &c. But all figures must fail in the illustration. But in reference to striving against God, notice,

III. Its final results.

1. *We cannot injure Deity.* We might injure a potsherd like ourselves. Even a weak man may injure a powerful one. But God is too high for the arrows of the sinner's rebellion. We cannot baffle, or confuse, or disturb his felicity. Neither,

2. *Can we benefit ourselves.* Who hath hardened himself against the Lord and prospered? Who indeed? Is there any case on record? The man who strives against God converts the pure stream into a deadly current, the wholesome air into a pestilent atmosphere, and all the enjoyments of life into sources of wretchedness and misery. It blights all the soul's prospects of felicity forever. Nor can we,

3. *Escape the triumphs of the divine judgments over us.* One must prevail. We cannot; then God will; and his prevailing will be our wo. "Wo unto him," &c. The vengeance of God is the direst wo, and it must be endured; the wo of his displeased and incensed countenance; the wo of his righteous sentence; wo of his fiery indignation which shall consume the adversaries; wo of everlasting misery as the desert of iniquity; wo unto him—to each and all such. To the beggar and the monarch; to the great and the small; to the learned and the ignorant; to the young and the old; to all and every one.

APPLICATION.

Probably there are four descriptions of character here.

1. *The strivers against God, who are indifferent, perhaps reckless.* Oh think and stop in your career, &c.

2. *Those who occasionally relent and hesitate.* Allow those good emotions to prevail. They are heaven's distilling dews. "Grieve not the Spirit of God," &c.

3. *Those who are suing for mercy.* Oh now exclaim, "I yield, I yield, I can hold out no more," &c.

4. *To the children of God.* Rejoice in your religious experience, and labor for the weal of others. Feel for others,

"Oh tell to all the world around
What a dear Saviour you have found."

REFUGE OF LIES.

"And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies."—Isaiah xxviii. 17.

Numerous are the stratagems of Satan to ruin souls. In some he effects this by hurrying them on in the broad way of open transgression; in others by rendering them the victims of some peculiar constitutional sin; as pride, cruelty, oppression, avarice, &c.; in others by inciting a spirit of disbelief to the truth. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." In others by inducing inattention to the things of the soul. But our text leads us to contemplate the false refuges to which he causes others to betake themselves. Observe, sinners often feel the necessity of a refuge; they frequently betake themselves to refuges of lies; such refuges will be ultimately swept away.

I. Sinners often feel the necessity of a refuge. This arises sometimes from,

1. *An internal sense of guilt.* Unless in cases of utter obduracy, transgression and remorse are ever wedded together. Even Pagans have felt these workings of conscience, these pangs of guilty torture. Under these, men sigh for peace, long for rest, and earnestly desire a refuge.

2. *From the calamitous events of life.* Sudden adversity, domestic bereavements, visiting the open grave of some friend; bodily indisposition, mental disquietude, &c.

3. *From the supposed nearness of death.* How men, who mock at religion in health, quail at the approach of death! How Voltaire trembled in a storm, how anxious then to have deliverance, to obtain a refuge!

4. *Under the alarming influences of the preached word.* When the truth has flashed across the mind and startled the conscience. Thus Felix, and thus thousands. How lamentable that these impressions and convictions are often so fleeting, so evanescent; but still more so when they flee to sources of false security. Notice then,

II. Sinners frequently betake themselves to refuges of lies. Of these notice,

1. *Partial reformation of life.* Giving up the grosser sins of which they have been guilty: intemperance, avarice, profanity, wrath, injustice, fraud, &c. Now the amputation of a member, when the whole body is diseased, is fruitless.

2. *A general regard to Christian morality.* To the outward acts of obedience. If parents, parental regard to their children; if children, filial obedience; discharge of the social duties, general uprightness, external decorum, propriety of speech, a rigid regard to truth, all of which are good in their legitimate sphere and extent.

3. *An outward profession of religion.* Punctual regard to public worship, a proper regard to ordinances, a name among the people of God, zeal against infidelity and irreligion. Then we may notice,

4. *A prominent and public sectarian spirit.* Rigid adherence to party, and sect, and creed; violent anathematizing all others; great ardor in the public events of the church to which they belong. "Come, see my zeal," &c.

5. *Distinguished generosity and charity.* Liberality to the poor, works of beneficence, enrolled among the compassionate and benevolent. "Give their goods to feed the poor," &c. Now all these are often only refuges of lies; all these may engage a man's anxious attention, and the root of the matter have no place in his heart. We may add,

6. *A general reliance on the mercy of God.* A kind of self-confident persuasion that God is good, that he will not punish, an indefinite resting on his clemency, forgetting his righteousness, purity, truth, &c.

III. Such refuges will be ultimately swept away. They will be so,

1. *In a dying hour.* Then the mental vision often becomes peculiarly acute, the moral sense keen and distinct, and the honesty of the Spirit throws off the tinsel mask, which is now manifestly worse than useless. How poor and worthless is self-righteousness, in all its possible extent, to a spirit just stepping into the presence of the holy God! A queen of England, although professing to be "defender of the faith," and having bishops at her control, felt this, and died in circumstances of unutterable alarm.

2. *In the morning of the resurrection.* Then all classes and distinctions will be reduced to two. None but the righteous will have a part in the first resurrection. Others will rise with shame, confusion, and horror, to everlasting contempt.

3. *In the decisions of judgment.* God will judge all men in righteousness. The wicked and the righteous will be separated, as a man separateth the sheep from the goats; no pretence will avail, no disguise, no plea, no stratagem, no importunity, no effort to flee, &c. All refuges of lies will be swept away.

APPLICATION.

1. Warn against these destructive schemes and wiles of Satan.

2. Exhibit the one only refuge, Jesus Christ, who delivers from the wrath to come.

3. Urge instant faith in him; "Count all things but loss," &c. All who believe in him are secure for both worlds; to this refuge repair every one, earnestly, and now.

GOD'S SOLICITUDES FOR MANKIND.

"Oh that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever."—Deuteronomy v. 29.

Our text refers to God, and his ancient people Israel. At the time of the giving of the law, under the influence of fear, and no doubt in the full sincerity of their hearts, they had said to Moses, "Speak thou unto us all the words that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." God approved of their holy determination, but knowing the deceitfulness of the heart, he says, "Oh that there were such an heart in them," &c. Jehovah had the concern for Israel he has for you, he desires you to possess sincere and unfeigned piety, that religion, which will benefit you forever, and be a blessing to your posterity after you. We shall ground several propositions upon the text.

I. True religion is inseparably connected with a peculiar state of heart. "Oh that there were such an heart," &c. The state of the heart naturally is evil; an evil root, an evil fountain. It is described as a heart of stone; cold, hard, unyielding, deceitful, &c.; it is described as proud, self-willed, and carnal. Now, with this state of heart there can be no piety. This heart, therefore, must be reno-

vated, so as to become a new heart, flesh instead of stone, spiritual instead of carnal, contrite instead of callous, lowly instead of proud; in one word, it must be renewed and made spiritual, cleansed, &c. "Old things," &c. This is a very important consideration, the basis of acceptable religion. "My son, give me thy heart," &c.

II. A RIGHT STATE OF HEART WILL BE CONNECTED WITH THE FEAR OF GOD. Many dare God, insult, blaspheme, &c.; many never think of God, &c.; many regard him with horrific dread. All these states of mind are equally contrary to religion. A right state of heart will produce fear, reverential fear, holy fear, filial fear. "The fear of God" is often used for the whole of religion. His perfections, works, glory, judgments, should all inspire this fear.

III. A RENEWED HEART WILL BE EVINCED BY EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE. Not will-service, not self-righteousness, not meritorious obedience, but evangelical obedience, as the fruit of a right state of mind, the effect of faith, the obedience of love. Now this evangelical obedience should be evinced in two ways.

1. *By its universality.* "All my commandments." They are all right, wise, good; all of them are important and necessary; ye cannot be right-minded and wish to choose, &c. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever," &c.

2. *By its perpetuity.* "Always." Most men do what is right occasionally, but our obedience must be constant. "Always,—in season and out of season, in prosperity and adversity, under reproach, persecution," &c.; at all rates and hazards, "Be faithful unto death," &c.

IV. TRUE RELIGION IS ESSENTIALLY CONNECTED WITH OUR WELL-BEING. "That it might," &c. Now this is true

1. *As to our present well-being.* It is well for the body and the soul, for the mind and the heart. It exalts—improves—blesses—comforts—saves, &c.

2. *As to our future well-being.* It shall be well with the righteous, "They shall be mine," &c. They are heirs of glory. "Shall see the King in his beauty," &c.; they shall die in peace, and dwell with God forever. "When flesh and heart fail," &c.

V. JEHOVAH IS SINCERELY CONCERNED THAT THIS RELIGION SHOULD BE OUR INDIVIDUAL PORTION. Hence his declarations—provisions—invitations—forbearance, &c. His nature disposes him to this, his glory also.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the true characteristics of acceptable religion.* Renewed heart, fear, and evangelical obedience.

2. *Learn the desirableness of true piety.* Our welfare, &c.

3. *The influence of true piety on our posterity, &c.*

4. *The inexcusableness of those who are irreligious, &c.* "Oh that," &c.

THE PRIDE AND OBSTINACY OF THE SINNER.

"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God."—PSALM x. 4.

Two points in theology we deem of essential importance; they cannot be too highly estimated, too seriously pondered, or too frequently considered. The first is this, all good is from God; he is the one source of light, and purity, and bliss. Whatever excellency or enjoyment pertains to men, God is the author, and the whole glory belongs to his name. The second is, that the evil and misery of man are of himself, and that all the blame of his wretchedness and ruin is his own. This is often exhibited to us in the scriptures, &c. Two or three passages shall suffice. "I have called," &c. "Ye will not," &c. "Whatsoever a man soweth," &c. And also the text. The text contains a character to be defined—a line of conduct to be explained—and the cause which is assigned for that conduct. The text contains,

I. A CHARACTER TO BE DEFINED. "The wicked." We are too apt to apply the term to the notorious—to the profligate, &c. There is one view I wish to impress upon you, that the absence of real piety involves the charge of wickedness. We are not to judge by the opinions of men, by human laws, but by the scriptures of divine truth. I ask not the magistrate of the district—I ask not the persons you travel with—I ask not your neighbors, or friends, or family; but I inquire of the oracles of eternal truth. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you enjoy and obey the influences of the Spirit? Do you love God supremely?

Are you spiritually minded? Do you seek first and chiefly the kingdom of God, &c.? Are you actuated by the holy principles of the gospel? If not, however intellectual, you do not know God; or moral, you do not serve him; or amiable, you have not his mind; or religious, yet you have not the Spirit of Christ Jesus; unless the heart has been renewed, and the mind of the Saviour imparted, we belong to the class described in the scripture as being wicked. How many then of this character are now before God in this assembly? Do I belong to it, or have I been saved from it? Observe in the text,

II. A LINE OF CONDUCT WHICH MUST BE EXPLAINED. "Will not seek after God." Let some truths premise our remarks here. Men are alienated from God by sin. All men have forsaken him. God is willing to be sought by his wandering children. He desires their return; he employs means for it; many by these means have returned and sought God, and obtained mercy. But the wicked will not seek, &c.

1. *They will not seek after the knowledge of God.* "Some men," &c. All other knowledge they admire, extol, &c. They would be ashamed to be ignorant of letters —of general science—of literature, &c. But they know not God, &c.; neither will they seek in the volume of eternal truth to attain this knowledge. No time, or talent, or opportunity, given to this. Created things, but not the Creator. Sublunary, but not the immortal. Often frivolous, &c., but not the supreme good.

2. *They will not seek after reconciliation with God.* They have rebelled, transgressed, &c. God is displeased with their conduct—they are under sentence of wrath, yet they act and live as though they were secure. No sincere anxiety to enjoy the favor of God.

3. *They will not seek conformity to God's likeness.* Most men desire to resemble some one or some class. The ambitious, the rich, the influential; but they care not to resemble the divine holiness; aim not at attaining the image of God. They do not love or admire spiritual purity, therefore will not seek to possess it.

4. *They do not seek after fellowship with God.* "God is not in all their thoughts." They desire not communion with God either in public or private; they say, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." They seek this in reference to kindred spirits; they commune with nature and art, but not with God. Let us notice

III. THE CAUSE OF THIS PROCEDURE WHICH THE TEXT ASSIGNS. "Pride." Undue esteem of self. Arrogant estimation of their own powers, &c.

1. *Pride hates the view which the scriptures give of human nature.* It will not have man dethroned. Will not allow his total depravity—his nelplessness—misery, desert, &c.

2. *Pride approves not of the divine supremacy.* Each carnal heart would rule —hold the reins—sway the sceptre. Likes not God's control. Approves not being subordinate in every thing to Deity.

3. *Pride often rejects the way of salvation.* As a free gift, all of grace. It says, Let me do something—excel and win it—strive and conquer for it—suffer and earn it—work and pray for it.

4. *Pride objects to the means connected with salvation.* Contrition, confession, abasement, restitution, lowliness, &c., of heart, confession of Christ before men.

5. *Pride dislikes the universality of salvation.* Murmurs that the vilest, &c., should be equally welcome; or the poorest—or the most illiterate. It would have a dispensation to itself—a respectable religion, a peculiar kind of service, not vulgar, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Have you sought after God?* In truth. Earnestly and prayerfully.

2. *Or are you indifferent?* What is the cause, &c. Is it pride? Examine, be particular, faithful, minute, &c.

3. *The threats to the proud are fearful.* Publicly disgraced, brought low, &c.; covered with shame, &c. No distinction in the great day, either of rank, or talent, &c.

4. *All are now invited to seek after God.* "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c.

GOD'S GRACIOUS INVITATION TO SINNERS.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—ISAIAH i. 18.

IT is scarcely possible to conceive of a more interesting and delightful exhibition of the love and mercy of God, than is pre-

sented to us in these words; unless they had been found in the volume of eternal truth, we might justly have doubted their veracity. For the speaker in the text is Jehovah, a Being infinitely happy and glorious in himself, whose felicity and dignity cannot be enlarged or diminished. He needs not, on his own account, the return of the sinner to himself; besides, he is the offended party. It is his authority which nas been slighted. His laws violated—his goodness abused—his holy image effaced. How marvellous, then, that he should stoop to ask reconciliation with poor wretched man, the rebel and traitor against heaven! Yet so it is. "Come now, and let us reason together," &c. Notice,

I. THE CHARACTERS ADDRESSED. Now the characters are not such as excel in moral excellency, but the reverse, the debased, the vilest and most degraded of sinners, represented, in their iniquities, as being like unto scarlet or crimson. How apt we are to think that such are too low to be raised up, too defiled to be made clean, too far alienated to be reclaimed! Whatever we may think, these are the invited in our text, and these are the characters we are now to contemplate. Who then are included in the description; their sins being as scarlet, &c. Now it includes,

1. *Those whose sins are glaring and manifest.* There is much invisible evil in existence. Much hidden in the deep recesses of the soul. Much that the eye of man or angel never sees. There may be hidden thoughts of impiety, and blasphemy, and infidelity, and anger, and malice. But externa circumstances act in the moral world as the shore to the ocean, limiting and bounding its waters. Now a great many of the ungodly are thus restrained, and it is well for society and the church of Christ that it is so. But we find numbers who have gone beyond this boundary, who are not ashamed of their iniquities. Who countenance wickedness in public places and bear the mark of the beast in their foreheads. Many revel in iniquity. Drink it in as the ox drinketh water. Loudly blaspheme. Openly debase themselves, and glory in their shame. The sins of such are as scarlet or as crimson.

2. *It will apply to those whose iniquities are especially productive of much evil and misery.* To those who are ring-leaders in sin; those who constrain others to do wickedly; those who are champions of vice; ridiculers of piety, and who labor to throng the road to hell with their fellow-sinners; and here let me refer to those who are heads of families. Your children and domestics look up to you; they will extensively be, what you appear to be. You create the deadly atmosphere they breathe, you poison the waters they drink. What cruelty such display to their families! You swearing, you drunken heads of families, you who have ruined your children.

3. *It will apply to those who have sinned against great privileges and mercies.* Now it cannot be doubted that many who are in a condition of darkness would have been otherwise, had tney possessed the privileges which others have enjoyed. Thus Christ said, "Wo unto thee, Chorazin! Wo unto thee, Bethsaida," &c. As it is with nations and cities, so it is with individuals. How many have had privileges and mercies of a high character! I place among these pious parents. You had their example, their prayers, their best counsels, their dying entreaties. I place religious society. You have moved in a circle favorable to piety; you have seen religion embodied, &c. A faithful ministry. You have had the gospel in purity, plainness, and affection. I place also striking providences. God has met you in affliction, in bereavements, &c. What did you say, resolve, and vow before God? And what have you done? Are you not ingrates, promise-breakers, mockers of God?

4. *It will apply to backsliders.* Such as have once been enrolled in Christ's army, but who have deserted and gone over to the camp of the devil. Who once prayed, but now have refrained, &c. What an awful state! What grief you have caused to the church! How you have dishonored Christianity, and wounded the Saviour in the house of his friends! How infidels have scoffed! How the world has been hardened! Poor miserable apostate! are not thy sins "as scarlet, yea, as crimson," &c.

5. *It will apply to aged transgressors.* Those who have grown gray-headed in the service of sin. Old age is unnerving that arm, which has ever been lifted up against God. Oh think of the course you have pursued! Think how countless your sins! Think how unnumbered your provocations; and yet you are adding to the dye and making it deeper and deeper. What hard-

ness of heart! What callousness of spirit! What thoughtlessness of soul! "Your sins are as scarlet," &c. Observe then,

II. The invitation Jehovah presents. "Come and let us reason," &c. He wishes to have your state and condition tested by reason. He gives you the opportunity of self-defence; he is willing to hear all your motives, and arguments, &c. Now will you come to God, and reason with him? What will you say?

1. *You cannot plead ignorance.* You have been conscious of the evil of your ways. Reason, conscience, scripture, condemn you. You have known better; your eyes have been open. You have seen the evil, and yet have chosen it.

2. *You cannot plead necessity.* The Jews of old said, they were sold to do evil; that is, they could not avoid it. Now, if any of you imagine this, it is the grossest self-deception; it cannot be the will of God that you should do evil. This is horrid and impious indeed. You have sinned freely, it has been your own act and choice.

3. *You must plead guilty.* And in doing so you must cast yourselves upon the mercy of God. If guilty, and if all the evil and blame is with you, then God must be clear, and you condemned. What then must be the result, must sentence go forth? Not if you will,

4. *Plead the merits of Christ.* Here is the sacrifice for sin. Here your hope, your plea.

> "'Tis just the sentence should take place—
> 'Tis just, but oh! thy Son has died."

Now in availing yourself of this plea, all that God requires is repentance and faith. Confess and forsake sin, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do this, then notice,

III. The gracious promise given. "Though your sins be as scarlet," &c.

1. *All your sins shall be blotted out.* Every one both of omission and commission. All your sins of heart, lip, and life; from the first to the last. Blotted out as a cloud.

2. *You shall stand accepted in Christ.* He shall behold you in Christ as righteous. Look at the hue and the dye of the guilty sinner; when accepted look again. Not one mark, not one spot, not one charge.

3. *By sanctifying grace you shall be made fit for glory.* He will give you a new nature, and make you really and perfectly holy. "Without spot or wrinkle," &c. And this shall be followed,

4. *By the gift of eternal life.* Rom. vi. 23; 1 John v. 11.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let me urge you all to come and reason with God, and do it now.* There is salvation for every one.

2. *If you will not come, you will be without excuse.*

3. *You must come to him in death and judgment.*

TERMS OF DISCIPLESHIP.

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—Matthew xvi. 24.

To perfectly holy beings it must be a source of indescribable pleasure to obey God. The faculties and powers of such intelligences only find a proper sphere of exercise in the divine service. To hearken to God, to do with the most fervent zeal his will, is the highest enjoyment of which they are capable. Now, the very reverse of this is true when applied to depraved, polluted creatures. Sin, then, is the end of their actions, and in that they have carnal delight and pleasure. Sin in such cases is natural, even as the stream must be foul where the fountain is corrupt—the fruit worthless, when the tree is evil. Religion, therefore, does violence to the carnal mind; self must be crucified; and, from the necessity of the case, no man can be a disciple of Jesus unless he deny himself, &c. Observe the course prescribed; the advantage with which it is connected; and the means of its exemplification. Notice,

I. The course prescribed. Three things are noted by the Redeemer:—

1. *Self-denial.* "Let him deny himself." Self is often ignorant, presumptuous, confident, wayward, &c. Self seeks gratification, ease, and exaltation. Now, all these are the fruit of sin, and contrary to God and holiness. There cannot be religion with self-satisfaction—with self-righteousness—with self-pleasing. Just as in taking the nauseating draught, violence is done to the taste—or in the painful am

natation of a member, violence is done to the feelings; so, in serving God, the old man, the flesh must be crucified; self must be subverted; and the will of God become the supreme law of the mind.

2. *Reproach and suffering.* "Let him take up his cross." The cross is the symbol of ignominy and pain, and there can be no genuine evidence of piety without bearing the cross. This cross is often composed of the envy and reproaches of the wicked —the false accusations and persecutions of those who hate the Redeemer and his holy cause; and so long as the world is under the power of Satan, it will harass, defame, and, if possible, injure the followers of Jesus. This Christ expressly stated to his disciples; and the experience of all true Christians establishes that scriptural statement, "That it is through much tribulation," &c.

3. *Imitation of the Saviour.* "And follow me." Jesus is the example of his people. "He hath left us an example," &c. "My sheep hear my voice." We must follow him in a conscientious regard to the ordinances and commandments of God; in a public avowal of holiness to the world; in the hallowed exercises of pure devotion; in the discharge of the practical duties of the Christian life; in a life of continued activity and benevolence; in patient resignation under suffering. Christ must be set before us. "Looking unto Jesus," &c. Notice,

II. THE ADVANTAGES WITH WHICH THIS COURSE IS CONNECTED.

1. *A dignified union to Christ and his people.* By coming out from the world, Christ will receive us. He will admit us to enjoy union and fellowship with him; have a place in his spiritual family; be numbered among his disciples; have a relationship to Christ more exalted than that of the highest angel in heaven.

2. *A saving interest in his favor and love.* He will grant us the full and free remission of all sin; impart the spirit of adoption; give us internal tokens of his approbation; "Manifest himself," &c.; see John xiv. 23, xv. 1, &c.

3. *A constant supply of his all-sufficient grace.* Without this the Christian's life could not be sustained. His grace alone is sufficient for us; this he will freely and abundantly pour out. His love to us, his engagements, the experience of all saints, confirm this. He desires to bestow it in all its refreshing plenitude.

4. *A participation of his glory forever.* "If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him." Observe Christ's express declaration, "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me," &c., Matt. x. 32. Hear his sacerdotal prayer, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given," &c. John xvii. 24; Rev. iii. 5, 21. Now, a faithful regard to the course prescribed will eventually terminate in glory, immortality, and eternal life. We inquire, then, in reference to this course,

III. THE MEANS OF ITS EXEMPLIFICATION. How shall we deny ourselves?

1. *By obtaining a nature suited to the work.* The heart must be renewed; new spirit imparted, &c. By faith in Christ Jesus we become the sons of God, and partakers of the divine and holy nature.

2. *By seeking the aids of the Holy Spirit.* The Spirit will enable us to crucify the flesh, to forsake evil, to imitate Christ. He will guide, sanctify, establish, keep.

3. *By the continued exercise of faith.* "The just shall live by faith," &c. I am crucified with Christ, &c. By faith the Old Testament heroes conflicted and overcame.

4. *By having a single eye to the divine glory.* God will then honor, and support, and bless us; fulfil all his word, &c., guide by his counsel, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Here is encouragement for the Christian.
2. Hope for the penitential inquirer.
3. And admonitory warning for the formal.

MAINTENANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith."—HEBREWS x. 23.

THE apostle, in the previous verses, has been exhibiting Jesus Christ in his sacerdotal character. He represents the church as the house of God, over which Jesus is the great High Priest. He exhorts believers to an experimental acquaintance with his saving benefits, "Let us draw near," &c. He then enforces the importance of

Christian stability. "Let us hold fast," &c. Consider,

I. What the Christian profession involves. It involves,

1. *A saving knowledge of Christ.* Ignorance of Christ unfits for a profession. The gospel was written, and is preached, that men may know Jesus Christ. "This is life eternal," &c. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." We would see Jesus, is the inquiry; and then it should be, We have found him, &c. Jesus Christ in you, the hope of glory.

2. *It involves trust and confidence in Christ.* "Profession of our faith." Faith receives Christ—builds on Christ—unites us to Christ—and makes Christ all our own. Faith is the vital act of the soul, by which we commit all our concerns into his hands; expect from him and through him every blessing here; and finally, eternal life.

3. *It involves a public attestation of our approbation of Christ.* To profess, is to show forth—to exhibit—to let others see and know that we are the Lord's. It is to take his name as our badge—belong avowedly to his cause; to wear the livery of Christ; to speak the words of Christ; to show the spirit of Christ; to seek the glory of Christ; to be his witnesses—his confessors; to go forth without the camp; an opposite course to his enemies, and quite distinct from the formal and indifferent.

4. *It involves obedience to his ordinances and commands.* "My sheep hear my voice, and follow me." "If ye love me, keep my commandments." The promise is, that he will put his law into our hearts, and that we shall walk in his statutes and ordinances to do them This is not the obedience of fear, or of toil, but of love and a willing mind. "The love of Christ constraineth us." Now this profession Christ demands, if a man will be his disciple, that he should take up his cross and follow him. He said, "Whosoever is ashamed of me, I will be ashamed of him," &c.

II. By what is a Christian profession opposed? This opposition is implied, not expressed; but the exhortation is pointless without this. Now, this profession,

1. *Will be opposed by our adversary, Satan.* "Simon, Simon, Satan desires to have thee," &c. "Your adversary, the devil, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." His wiles—darts, &c.

2. *An ungodly world will oppose this profession.* "Marvel not that I said unto you, that the world will hate you." Christians have been hated, and persecuted, and reviled, and mocked, and put to death in all ages. If ye were of the world it would love you, but it now hates you; often worldly friends and relatives; a man's foes are often those of his own household.

3. *The remains of evil within us will oppose this profession.* An indolent heart; self-love; pride; ease; the flesh will war against the spirit; spirit of discontent, &c. But,

III. How is the Christian profession to be maintained?

1. *By holding fast to the sanctifying word of truth.* "I have no greater joy than that my children walk in the truth." "Sell it not." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you."

2. *Let us hold fast to the means of grace;* see verse 25. God has appointed the church to be a social compact—to form a united bulwark to the enemy. In the means of grace, we meet with God and take courage. Here we are refreshed for our journey; here we brighten our armor; here we stand on the mountain-top, and get a glimpse of the land which is afar off; here we drink of the brook by the way, and lift up our head.

3. *Let us hold fast to the person and work of the Saviour.* "He exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord"—adhere to him. "Except ye abide in me, and I in you," &c. Christ is our life. We walk in him, and derive all our grace, &c., from him. We must be nothing, and Christ Jesus every thing. Christ the Alpha, and the all in all; Christ our foundation—way—dress—food—pearl—joy—song—glory, &c. In salvation it must ever be, "None but Christ; none but Christ!"

4. *Let us hold fast to believing prayer.* Be instant in prayer, praying with all prayer. "Pray in faith, nothing doubting." Pray in secret. "Pray always," &c. Notice,

IV. The importance of carrying out both the letter and the spirit of the text.

1. *It is very important to those who are without.* "The world." If we give up our profession infidels and blasphemers will rejoice, worldlings will be hardened, form-

alists satisfied, inquirers discouraged. The mischief may be everlasting.

2. *It is important to our fellow-Christians.* How distressing to see those who walked with Christ turn aside—to see the soldiers of Christ desert! It tends to damp the zeal of the friends of Zion. How painful for the apostle to say, "Demas has forsaken me," &c.; how distressing to Moses to see the thousands of Israel sinning and perishing in the desert! But,

3. *It is all-important to ourselves.* If we go back, Christ's soul will have no pleasure in us. If, after we have put our hands to the gospel plough, we look back, we become unfit for the kingdom. Give up the profession of faith, and hope goes, peace goes, Christ goes, and heaven goes; for only he who endures to the end shall be saved.

APPLICATION.

1. *For the maintenance of this profession there is ample provision made.* Jesus says, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

2. *Remember your state before you professed the Saviour.* At that time when you were without Christ, and without hope, &c.

3. *Think of your enjoyments in religion.* Of the pleasures you now possess, &c.

4. *Look to the end.* The goal—the crown—the kingdom. Life is fast ebbing, time is receding, eternity approaching. Oh! then, hold fast.

5. *Who will resolve to profess Jesus now?* You half-hearted, you undecided, you seekers after bliss, now determine.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE TEMPTED.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."—1 CORINTHIANS x. 13.

IN this chapter the apostle is referring to several events in the history of the Israelites; and especially to the evils into which they fell. He then notes that these things were written for our admonition, &c., see verse 11. He then draws this important practical inference, "Wherefore," &c., ver. 12. Then he speaks of the temptations to which they might be liable, and assures them, "There hath no temptation," &c. Observe,

I. WHAT IS SAID CONCERNING THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE BELIEVER. It is clearly intimated,

1. *That believers must have temptations.* Now the term signifies to try, and often refers to the assaults of our enemy, the devil. The snares by which he endeavors to destroy the soul. It signifies also the opposition or enticements of evil men, and it includes the trials into which God may bring his people. In the text it must be confined to the first two of these, viz. the evils to which we may be exposed from Satan, and an evil world. Now these will ever be opposed to the happiness and holiness of the people of God. It is Satan's nature to deceive and destroy. "In the world," &c. "Marvel not," &c. Exemption is not to be expected, indeed, is not desirable. "Count it all joy," &c. James i. 2, &c. Indeed, without these we cannot be conformed to Christ. We must share in his sufferings, if we would participate in his glory. "Whosoever overcometh," &c. Now this implies temptation and opposition.

2. *It is affirmed that our temptations shall not be uncommon.* "There hath no temptation," &c. Now this is a great mercy. This ought greatly to cheer us. We shall only drink of the common cup. Have to do with the common evils, &c. We are apt to imagine our condition worse than that of others. There never was but one who could truly say, "There is no sorrow like unto my sorrow." Let me hear your complaints, in reference to your trials and temptations, which of them is uncommon.

(1.) Are you tempted to horrid and gross evils? Think of Job, who was tempted to curse God and die; think of Jesus, who was tempted to idolatry—to the worship of the devil.

(2.) Are you tempted to despond through a sense of your unworthiness,—see Abraham, the friend of God, yet he calls himself dust and ashes. Job exclaims, "Behold I am vile," &c. Isaiah, "Wo is me." Peter said, "Depart from me," &c.

(3.) Are you tempted that your trials are severe and greater than others? Look at Jacob, Aaron, David, Job, the first Christians.

(4.) Are you tempted to doubt the efficiency of prayer? Think of Paul, who prayed thrice, &c. Remember the importunate widow. Perhaps you merely wished. God desired to excite you to holy ardor, &c.

(5.) Are you tempted that God will forsake and leave you? See the case of Job, xxiii. 1–10. See Asaph, Psalm lxxvii. 7, &c. Observe,

II. WHAT IS SAID CONCERNING THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO HIS TEMPTED PEOPLE. "God is faithful." His truth and will are not affected. "I am the Lord, and change not." He is of one mind, &c. All the saints of past generations exclaim, "O Lord God, faithful and true!" One act of unfaithfulness would shake the confidence of all the saints and angels in heaven. He cannot be otherwise. Now the faithfulness of God will be seen in his goodness to his tempted people, and that in three respects.

1. *Temptation shall always be proportionate to your strength.* "Who will not suffer you to be," &c. He knows your frame, &c. He remembers your state. He watches the fire and the floods. He apportions the medicine, &c. What consolation there is in this!

2. *He will ever provide a door of deliverance.* "Also make a way of escape," he did so to Abraham, in the ram caught. Never allow us to be shut up in temptation. See the case of the Israelites on their way to the Red Sea, when he divided the waters. When there is no other, there is always a way upwards. "Call upon me," &c. Psalm cvii. 11.

3. *Until his people are delivered, they shall have strength to be able to bear it.* He will uphold and strengthen, as he did Paul. "My grace is sufficient," &c.

APPLICATION.

Let the Christian remember,

1. *Life is a state of trial, and we shall have grace sufficient for it.*

2. *Eternity a state of reward, and glory will amply compensate for the sorrows of life.*

3. *Let not temptations drive you from Christ, or produce apathy and carelessness as to your spiritual state.*

BELIEVERS, STRANGERS AND SOJOURNERS.

(ON THE LAST EVENING OF THE YEAR.)

"For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."—1 CHRONICLES XXIX. 15.

OUR text is the declaration of David, and is found among his last words. He lived to a good old age, therefore his testimony is the language of experience; he was a man both of knowledge and wisdom, therefore this saying should be treasured up Besides, he had reigned forty years over the nation of Israel, so that this is a royal saying. But he was a holy man, one in whom dwelt the spirit of inspiration; he wrote as he was moved, &c., so that this is God's saying to us through David. The truth expressed in the text is a general one; it has been realized in every age of the world; so that we cannot err in applying it to the present time and occasion. We remark, however true,

I. THAT THE TEXT IS NOT THE LANGUAGE OF MANY OF OUR FELLOW-MEN. They are the children of this world—the creatures of time; all their actions and arrangements, maxims, plans, spirit, &c., have to do with this world. They read and think, they buy and sell, &c., build &c., only in reference to time. Absorbed in the things of time, they are strangers to heavenly and eternal things. Yet, whether they will or not, they must sojourn only for a season; the stream of time is bearing them onward, &c. "The place that knows them now," &c.

II. THE TEXT HAS BEEN THE LANGUAGE OF THE GODLY IN ALL AGES. Abraham, when treating for a burying-place, said, "I am a stranger and sojourner," &c.; the patriarchs, who died in faith, are represented as confessing that they were strangers, &c.; Peter exhorts the scattered Christians of his time to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, &c.; the Christian recognises this truth.

1. *He feels that he is a stranger.* His affections, &c., are not here; he uses the world, but does not love it. As a traveller, his heart is fixed on his home; as a mariner, on the haven above.

2. *He acts as a stranger.* He conducts his affairs as such; he buys, &c.; he rejoices, &c.; he does not entangle and absorb his mind, &c.; he sits loose, &c. Then he has to do constantly with his intended residence; his prayers go there, his hopes, his desires; he receives intellectuality from them; he is preparing himself for that world; he has a title; he has the nature of the inhabitants; he is meetening for it.

3. *He speaks as a stranger.* His lan-

guage is that of Zion; he speaks of Christ and spiritual things; his language shows that he is a stranger, &c.

4. *His dress is that of a stranger.* Garment of righteousness. He is seen and known by the works which men behold; his dress is not that of worldly vanity and show, but the righteousness of his Lord and Master.

III. As a sojourner the Christian's state is deserving of peculiar attention.

1. *It is exceedingly uncertain.* "It is as a shadow." It may be a flitting, transient one, or more lengthy, but it is not to be reckoned upon, or trusted to. At best it is but a shadow.

2. *The Christian's time here is short.* As a swift post; as a weaver's shuttle; as an eagle; as a vapor; as a thing of naught.

3. *The Christian's removal hence is certain.* No one's time is abiding. God dwells in one endless duration without change; but man must quit this state of being. "I know that thou wilt," &c. "The living know," &c. Nothing can reverse that solemn, stern decree, &c.

4. *But we add, the Christian's sojourn is ever under the divine direction and care.* He does not wander at random; he is not the creature of chance; he is not without a guide and guard. The providence of God is all these, and infinitely more to him. God illumines his way, directs his steps, supplies his wants, chases away his fears; he conducts by his counsel, and afterwards receives into glory. We notice, finally, the Christian sojourner's removal hence is always his advantage. On earth he is distant from his inheritance, friends, and complete dignity. "To live is Christ, but to die is gain." "Mark the perfect man," &c. An abundant entrance is administered, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *To the man who does not feel the text.* Let me entreat you to pause, and think, and weigh its truths; let the year pass in review. How many of your friends and acquaintance have died? Do not shut your eyes and ears; this will not avail. Love the world as you may, you must leave it; you cannot stay, nor take it with you. Seek a better; from this hour do so; your lease may almost have expired.

2. *To the Christian stranger.*

(1.) Be vigilant, that you do not imbibe the spirit of the world.

(2.) Exhibit the joys of Christianity in your experience. "Thy statutes shall be my song," &c. "Return to Zion singing," &c. "The joy of the Lord," &c. This will recommend your Saviour and his religion.

3. *Let us do all we can for the improvement of the world.* There is very much to be done. What ignorance, wretchedness, sin, &c. Shine; do good; diffuse the graces of religion; exert Christian influence.

4. *Especially let us labor to take others with us to heaven.* "Come with us," &c. Let our present meditation embrace God's blessings, that we may be thankful; God's grace and sufficiency, that we may trust in him; our sins, that we may be contrite, &c.; the great remedy, that we may come to it, &c.

THE RENEWAL OF THE INWARD MAN.

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."—2 Corinthians iv. 16.

The text refers to the sufferings of the apostles, and their being overruled for the good of the churches, and the glory of God. He then refers to their preservation and continuance in their holy calling. "For which cause we faint not," &c. Observe,

I. Of what the apostle speaks. "The inward man," signifies the mind or soul, that living, intellectual being which thinks, and wills, and desires, &c. All moral qualities and responsibilities have to do with the soul. The body—the outward man—is the mansion of the inward man. The senses and members of the body obey the supreme dictations of the soul. Now, the inward man has its desires and necessities. It is capable of exhaustion and weakness; it is vulnerable, and may be injured; or it may be diseased, and it is exposed to spiritual death. Notice,

II. What the apostle declares concerning it. He says, it is renewed. The word signifies to restore, to invigorate, &c. Now, the Christian's toils, conflicts, sufferings, and temptations, produce weakness, fatigue, &c.; therefore the soul of the Christian requires to be renewed, or he

would faint and be overcome. Now, we require,

1. *The renewing of our desires.* The hungering and thirsting to be kept up; desires after God and holiness, &c.

2. *Our affections.* Our love to God, and his word, and ordinances; love to his holy precepts.

3. *Our ability and spiritual strength.* Power to resist evil, to walk in the way of the Lord, to go onward in the Christian conflict. Now, this renewal of the inward man must be *constant*, "Day by day." Thus the body is renewed day by day; thus, by dews and showers, the earth is renewed day by day. We ask,

III. How God renews the inward man day by day.

1. *By the communications of his word.* God's word is spiritual food, milk, honey, water, &c.

2. *By the visitations of his Spirit.* His Holy Spirit revives, quickens, strengthens, &c.

3. *By blessings on the ordinances.* "They that wait," &c. How necessary,

(1.) That we feel our need of this. And,

(2.) That we humbly, yet believingly, seek it by daily prayer.

SELFISHNESS.

"For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."—Philippians ii. 21.

Our text is to be understood as involving a very general censure, but not in reality a universal one. Most persons act very extensively under the influence of selfishness. Very few, compared with the multitude, crucify self, or rigidly practise the true spirit of self-denial. Now, there is a principle of self-love which is lawful, and which is planted in our nature for the very wisest of purposes. Every man has an innate love of life, of happiness, &c. We are not to be indifferent to these things; but love to these things may become so inordinate, and so absorb our feelings and thoughts, as to transform us into the characters condemned in the text, or as described by the apostle, when writing to Timothy, "Lovers of their own selves." Let us consider some exhibitions of this spirit—trace it to its source—notice its evils—and recommend the means of deliverance from it.

I. Let us consider some exhibitions of this spirit. It is seen,

1. *In a desire to obtain self-gratification.* This gratification may consist in the pleasures of sense—in amusements of the world—or in mental recreations; but, whatever may be the choice, if the spirit is occupied in arranging, and contriving, and carrying out expedients to meet its own absorbing desires, then is it evident that selfishness is predominant.

2. *In seeking to assume self-dominion.* Love of power is not confined to legislators and men of rank; it is often seen in the tyranny of the village schoolmaster; in the arrogance of heads of families; in masters and mistresses; in ministers and officers of the church. Now, let this be the ruling passion, and selfishness is evidently predominant.

3. *In intense eagerness for popular applause.* Some would be monopolizers of the good-will and praises of mankind; constantly panting after the approbation of their fellow-creatures; seek with deep solicitude the honor that cometh from men. The most vain and censurable methods are often adopted to obtain this end. The joy of such is suspended on the verdict of popular opinion.

4. *In a craving after the possessions of the world.* This is a very common passion, and one of the worst; to seek their own temporal prosperity in preference to every other object. This spirit of covetousness has been known to trample upon all rights, dissolve the dearest ties, and adopt the most odious measures for the sake of gain. A thirst for gold is one of the most debasing passions that can pollute and pervert the soul. Now, these are the most common exhibitions of the spirit of selfishness. Let us,

II. Trace this spirit to its source. This is expressed in one word—depravity. It arises from the moral derangement of the powers—from the undue elevation of one of the feelings of the heart over the higher and more noble faculties of the soul. We see it as the master-spirit in the first transgression. Was it not this that prompted the desire to take and eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil? and this perverted, diseased nature, has been handed down to all the posterity of the first guilty pair. Hence it is the natural bent of the fallen nature—the necessary

tendency of the corrupt mind; and hence the universality of its manifestation in all ages, classes, and countries; the mass seek their own; all grades of human beings are distinguished for it. It is the plague-spot of our world, and the bane of the family of man. There may be customs, and usages, habits, &c., all favorable to it; but the spring of this stream is man's depravity, the evil state of the heart. Let us note,

III. Its evils. These are legion. Look at it,

1. *In its influence on the mind and heart of its victims.* Its very tendency is to deface the image of God; to dry up the fountain of goodness in the soul; to demoralize the man; to wither its moral beauty and loveliness; to spread o'er it the foul plague spot. It robs it of its enjoyment, prevents its growth and expansion, and eclipses its glory.

2. *Observe its influence on society.* It either isolates, or binds men together in clannish bands, or in base and unprincipled confederacies. Let it be carried out to its full length, and it would leave weakness unaided, misery unpitied, wretchedness unregarded, ignorance unlamented, and all the sorrow and grief of our world uncared for. A man of this kind is often the curse of the domestic sphere, the bane of the neighborhood, the iceberg of the church, and the barren fig-tree of the world.

3. *It is one of the anomalies of the universe.* God has created all creatures and things to have a mutual influence for good on one another. The angels live not for themselves; the sun shines for the benefit of the solar system; the wind blows, the rivers run, the ocean moves, the earth feeds, all nature exercises her functions for relative principles and ends; there is not one isolated, self-destined operation in the universe.

4. *It is totally unlike God.* "The Father of lights, from whom proceedeth every," &c. God exists to diffuse blessedness; he reigns for this; all his attributes have respect to this; all his works, and ways, and word, &c. Especially, how unlike God manifest in the flesh, &c.; how unlike the anthem of the angels at his birth; his life, his death, &c. Observe,

IV. The means of deliverance from it. The renewal of the mind and soul; the entire sanctification of body, soul, and spirit; the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all his guiding and controlling influences. Thus the fountain will be made pure, the tree good, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. The existence of this spirit in the church is owing to the low spiritual state of believers.

2. Against it all Christians should prayerfully strive.

3. It can have no existence in the heavenly world.

THE EVIL OF SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE.

"That the soul be without knowledge is not good."—Proverbs xix. 2.

Our text is one of the concise proverbs of Solomon. Most of these brief sentences contain a great fund of thought, and they have this especial recommendation, they are easily committed to memory, and the impression they make is often long and vividly retained. The ancients were famous for conveying their doctrines and principles in this condensed form. The Proverbs of Solomon, as they are unrivalled in beauty and excellency, so they stand forth as being indited under the inspiring influences of God. They are divine, therefore they are true. And they are generally as important as they are true. Of all these proverbs there is not one of greater moment than that of our text. "That the soul," &c.

I. Let us illustrate and establish the truth of the text. Before we enter on the chief point, we offer a few preliminary remarks. By the soul we mean the intellectual, thinking part of man. That spiritual, reflecting, undying, and dignified inhabitant of our frail and perishing bodies. Knowledge signifies perception, illumination. The opposite of ignorance and darkness of mind. Now knowledge may either be associated with that which is temporal, or metaphysical, or moral. It may either be speculative or practical. Knowledge of nature, or science, or art, is good, and desirable, and important. But that knowledge which is pre-eminent is religious knowledge. Knowledge of God and his will; knowledge of ourselves, our condition, our duty, our privileges and blessings,

our destiny; knowledge of Jesus Christ and his great salvation. This is the excellency, the essence, the perfection of knowledge. This is all necessary and necessary to all; it is so always, and will be so forever. A man may be wise, and good, and happy, without other kinds of knowledge, but none can be so without this. Then it is to spiritual and divine knowledge that we shall limit our subject on the present occasion. Now for the soul to be without knowledge is not good, because,

1. *It frustrates the end of our being.* The soul was formed for knowledge just as the sun for the communication of light. And as the bed of the ocean for the reception of the water, so the soul to be the depository of knowledge. Thus did Adam appear when formed in the image of his Creator. One grand and chief resemblance was in the intellectual faculties with which he was endowed, and the knowledge with which God invested him. The senses of the body are designed to be the inlets of knowledge as to the things around us. The eye, the hand, the taste, the smell, the hearing; the soul has its powers too; the understanding, by which we perceive and know; the judgment, by which we conclude as to the properties, &c., of the things we contemplate; the imagination, which colors and presents objects before us in their ideal forms. Memory, by which we retain and keep fast the things perceived and known. Now these powers avail not, they are perverted, if the soul be without knowledge, &c. "That the soul," &c.

2. *Because it is its degradation and debasement.* Knowledge is one of the glories of the divine nature; so it is also the dignity of man. In the fall, man lost much of this; darkness spread its fell mists over the soul; darkness pertains to the world beneath and exposes to its shame and contempt. Knowledge pertains to God and heaven, and makes us partakers of the glory of God. Without knowledge, man the monarch becomes the slave, the savage, the degraded creature of the material earth, and the companion of animals and beasts that prowl upon its surface. Not to know God and his will and works is the deep prostration of the creature of his image and his favor. For the soul, &c.

3. *Because it is its misery.* How pleasant, how cheering is its light! How sweet to behold the works of God, to look abroad on the fair face of nature, &c. Now to be without knowledge is to be blind, for knowledge is the sight of the soul; knowledge is the food of the soul, and without it, it must starve and die; knowledge is the health of the soul; ignorance is the disease and leprosy of the soul. View that being enslaved, blind, starving, diseased, and then you have a faint representation of the soul without knowledge.

4. *Because it is the guilt and condemnation of the soul.* Ignorance, especially to those under the privileges we possess, is sinful: it is criminal. We have the means, the facilities of knowledge. God requires us to possess it. If we are without divine knowledge, it is because we have disliked it, neglected it, and wiled away our opportunities and mercies. In the night none can see or discern the beauties which surround them; but ours is the day; the day is the period of light. Jesus proclaims himself the light of the world. We blame men not for being strangers to languages, to philosophy, to science, or art, without the facilities; but men may have moral intellectuality, spiritual knowledge. It is in the scriptures; it is published from day to day, and it is highly criminal not to know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Not to know ourselves and our destiny; not to know the day of our visitation. It is not good,

5. *Because it will be the death, the total ruin of the soul.* For the children of ignorance and darkness walk in the way of darkness, and their end will be blackness and darkness forever. "My people perish for lack of knowledge." The soul without knowledge is unfit for the enjoyment of God, and incapable of participating in the bliss of heaven. A person may have a volume of superior merit before him, but of what avail is it if he cannot read it? He may be surrounded with the most splendid scenery, but what avails it if he is blind? An essential prerequisite for heaven is the saving knowledge of God; this is life eternal. Heaven is the region of knowledge; the world of eternal light and day. Let me, then,

II. Ask what are the principles which our subject involves.

1. *The lamentable condition of those who are spiritually ignorant.* How many of these dwell around us! Are there not such in this assembly? The state of such

is truly pitiable, dark, condemned, perishing.

2. *The high estimation in which we should hold the privileges we possess.* We have the book, emphatically the key of knowledge; the whole mind of God to man; the guide to happiness and heaven. We have the messengers of knowledge; the preachers of the gospel are sent forth, that their lips may dispense knowledge. All the ordinances of religion are adapted to this end. We have many especial facilities which no age of the world ever had; abundant streams flowing from the press; means of instruction, especially schools. How different to our forefathers!

3. *The responsibility of the church of Christ to diffuse the knowledge of God abroad.* Believers are to shine, &c. We are to labor, holding forth the word of life, &c. We are to train up the rising age, &c. We are to pray, "O Lord, send out," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Have you this knowledge?* If so, grow in it, &c.

2. *If not, seek till you possess it.*

THE SCRIPTURAL INSTRUCTION OF THE YOUNG.

"And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way," &c.—DEUTERONOMY vi. 6–9.

OUR text is found in connection with a paragraph of peculiar weight and sublimity. Moses, that distinguished servant of Jehovah, is rehearsing to the people of Israel the high commandments of the Lord; he introduces the subject in the following striking and powerful manner; "Now these are the commandments," &c. Here you will perceive duty and privilege, obedience and reward, are united together. He then calls for their special attention. "Hear therefore," &c., verse 3. This exclamation he repeats, when referring to the unity of the Godhead, verse 4; he then lays the basis of his exhortations in the especial religion of the heart, verse 5; and then immediately builds upon it the duties prescribed in the text. "And these words," &c. Let us consider the subject to which the text refers; the duties the text enjoins; the mode of performance the text recommends. Now we have to notice,

I. THE SUBJECT TO WHICH THE TEXT REFERS. "And these words." Now the text may mean the entire law and will God had made known to Moses, and then revealed to the people, or to the immediate paragraph which precedes the text; but we may justly apply the text to the sacred scriptures in general. To the lively oracles both of the Old and New Testaments; the Bible in its comprehensive and complete character, including Moses and Christ, the prophets and the apostles. Now the scriptures contain a revelation of all essential truths; a summary of all Christian duties; a charter of all desirable blessings; it is the true guide to the knowledge of God, salvation, immortality, and eternal life. Emphatically the book of books, and to all who desire it, the record of salvation. It gives light to the ignorant, wisdom to the simple, and peace to the unhappy; it converts the soul, guides the feet, and sanctifies the heart; it is the pilgrim's staff, and the warrior's sword; the mine of wealth, and passport to glory! What a subject! A book, which has God for its author—truth for its matter—and salvation for its end. We pass from the subject,

II. TO THE DUTIES THE TEXT ENJOINS. It is the scriptural instruction of their children; to teach them the words of God and salvation. Now look at this in several lights.

1. *Our children are naturally ignorant of these things.* None, by mere dint of natural effort, ever found out the true knowledge of God; uninstructed, therefore, they will grow up in mental and moral darkness.

2. *In these things our children have a deep interest.* They have minds capable of instruction, the capacity for knowledge. There seems to be an inherent desire for knowledge; it is the very atmosphere of the soul's health and well-being. The true wealth of our children depends greatly on their acquisition of divine knowledge; their happiness essentially depends upon it; their usefulness in this life; and what is most of all, their eternal salvation. "My people perish for lack of knowledge."

3. *For the instruction of our children we are responsible.* I deny that this responsibility rests anywhere to the exclusion of

the parent; on him it rests. "Thy children," and as much as it rests upon them to provide food, and raiment, and medicine, &c. The care of the mind as well as of the body is committed to them, and the one is infinitely more weighty than the other. Parents may not in every case be able to teach their children, but then they must see that it is done. In our sabbath-schools, the church of Christ provides for those who cannot have Christian instruction at home, and also to aid those parents who are thus laudably engaged. Now we proceed to consider,

III. THE MODE OF PERFORMING THIS DUTY THE TEXT RECOMMENDS. The text enjoins,

1. *The possession of experimental religion in the teacher.* "These words, &c., shall be in thine heart." A mere mechanical teacher must have mechanical skill—a mental teacher, intelligence—a moral teacher, the principles of true morality in his own soul. The Christian teacher aims not only at informing the mind, and storing the memory, but amending the heart. A knowledge therefore of true religion only, can qualify the instructor for his work. The heart is the moral lever, to give weight and efficiency to the counsels of the lip; the heart only can make us earnest, and intent, and solicitous. Now this applies to all moral instructions. Parents, guardians, sabbath-school teachers, &c. The text enjoins,

2. *Diligence in the execution of this work.* It is not to be done cursorily, or with indifference; not by spasmodic throes, but by continued efforts; the difficulty of the task renders diligence indispensable. The variety of the instructions to be conveyed to the mind, and the short period allotted for the execution of the task Only the diligent will extensively succeed. We have enjoined,

3. *Frequency of effort.* Observe the detail of times and seasons, presented to us in the text. The first part of the day is to be thus occupied. This is to engage our attention through the day, "When thou sittest," &c. This is to be identified with our recreations, "When thou walkest by the way." This is to close all the other duties of the day, "When thou liest down." Now there are spiritual subjects, suited to each of these times and occasions; to be wise and apt in their use is very desirable. The text enjoins,

4. *Simplicity in the mode of instruction* I think this is included in the phrase, "Thou shalt talk." Nothing is more foolish, and of course useless, than to attempt to convey instruction to children, by orations or set speeches and addresses. If we are to instruct, to impress, to interest, we must talk. Bring down both words, ideas, and style to their capacities; this is a most desirable attainment, and essential to extended success; and in this how beautifully Christ the great teacher stands forth as our perfect model. Our efficiency may be easily tested, if we will catechize our children on the points in which they have been taught, and see if they have clearly and distinctly understood them. We add,

5. *Patience and perseverance.* All children are not equally quick, and apt to learn; the mind, in some cases, is slow of development. Now such instances must not be despised; they especially need our aid, and compassion for them should induce patient perseverance. To impart knowledge to the juvenile mind has been fitly compared to the pouring of a fluid into a long, narrow-necked bottle, where care, patience, and attention, and perseverance, are all requisite. But we observe,

6. *All instructions must be followed by fervent prayer.* Prayer should precede, accompany, and follow our efforts.

APPLICATION.

Our subject I fear is,

1. *The condemnation of many parents present.* Do not trifle with God's commands. You must meet your children at the last day. Our subject,

2. *Shows us the importance of sabbath schools.* These are the true seminaries of the church of Christ. These are the hope of the world.

3. *Efforts for instructing the young should meet with the generous and cheerful support of the pious.*

KNOWLEDGE, OBEDIENCE, AND FELICITY.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."—JOHN xiii. 17.

WHAT is true religion? Is not the question important; is it not necessary? None will dispute its importance or necessity. One replies, true religion is being of the

.rue church; and he limits this true church to his own denomination. Another replies, true religion is having sound opinions and views; and those are religious who of course agree with the sentiments he professes. A third replies, true religion is the regular observance of Divine worship, and a general regard to Christian morals. We reply to each and all of these, and say a person may be invested with each of these, and yet not be religious at all; he may belong to the purest Christian communion; he may hold the most orthodox sentiments, and he may lead the most exemplary life, and yet be a stranger to spiritual, practical godliness. True religion is beautifully delineated in the text; it is triune in its nature—knowledge—practice—felicity. If ye know, and do, then happy are ye. We notice, then,

I. IN ORDER TO TRUE RELIGION THERE MUST BE KNOWLEDGE. "If ye know," &c. Ignorance is one of the foul antagonists of religion. It is pernicious and ruinous to the soul; it is a foul libel on man, and a still fouler libel on religion, when utterance is given to this maxim, that "ignorance is the mother of devotion." No! ignorance is the mother of crime, and wretchedness, and wo, and it may be of superstition, but knowledge is one of the essential principles of religion.

1. *There must be a knowledge of the true God.* His nature, character, will.

2. *A knowledge of the scriptures.* A persuasion of their inspiration and truth; a knowledge of their contents, especially those parts which relate to our salvation.

3. *A knowledge of ourselves.* As fallen, sinful, polluted, helpless. To know the plague of our own hearts, &c.

4. *A knowledge of Jesus Christ.* As the sent of God—the true Son of the Most High—Mediator, &c. Of his gospel. What it reveals, and offers, and requires; now it reveals God's mercy; it offers salvation; and requires repentance, faith, and holiness. Surely a knowledge of these things is essential to true religion.

II. IN ORDER TO TRUE RELIGION THERE MUST BE OBEDIENCE. "Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord," &c. Neither knowledge nor talents will do without obedience. "Ye are my friends," &c. Now in doing these things,

1. *We must have respect to the will of God, as the rule of our obedience.* Not fancies, or feelings, or impulses, or the conduct of others, but the direct revelation of God. Have respect to all his commandments.

2. *We must do these things with humility of mind.* Not in the way of merit and self-righteousness; but with all lowliness, &c.

3. *We must do these things with cheerfulness and affection.* From a sense of grate ful love to Jesus Christ. Not from fear or constraint.

4. *We can only do these things in the strength of divine grace.* God must work both to will and to do. Not us, but the grace of God within us.

5. *Our obedience in doing these things must be constant and persevering.* Endure to the end, &c. We must be so found doing when Christ shall call us. Labor to the end of the day of life. Faithful unto death, &c.

III. THAT RELIGION IDENTIFIED WITH KNOWLEDGE AND OBEDIENCE, WILL CERTAINLY BE PRODUCTIVE OF FELICITY. "Happy are ye." We do not say it will secure riches, or honor, or wealth, or worldly friends, but it will tend to create happiness.

1. *There will be the happiness of a rightly regulated mind.* Chaos, and confusion, and night, exchanged for light, order, and day. A new creation in the soul. Old things have passed away, &c. God the soul's centre and rest.

2. *There will be the happiness of internal peace.* Peace with God—peace with conscience—peace with all men. The peace of God will keep and rule.

3. *There will be the happiness of conscious safety.* To have guilt cancelled—fetters burst; wrath removed. No longer under the curse, &c., but have the testimony of the Spirit, that we are children of God—now accepted.

4. *There will be the happiness of cheering hope.* Hope is the telescope of the soul—our anchor in storms—our staff in our pil grimage. Hope of victory, full salvation, and eternal life. Hope of heaven. Good, bright, solid hope. Begotten again to a lively hope, &c.

5. *The happiness of divine communications.* Grace in every time of need. Heavenly visitation, especially in secret duties, public ordinances. Oh yes! happy are ye. Truly so; increasingly so and shal. be eternally so.

APPLICATION.

1. *To the religious.* Is your religion of this threefold kind? Light in the mind—practice in the life—joy in the spirit. Are you not greatly deficient in each of these?

2. *Invite all to know, obey, and enjoy.* The means of knowledge you have, grace to obey is promised, and happiness must ensue.

ON OUR OWN MIND.

"Should it be according to thy mind?"—Job xxxiv. 33.

Few, if any, of the human family ever endured such severe trials as Job; and his unyielding confidence in God, his patience, and his humility, are left on record for the instruction of the afflicted of God's people unto the end of the world. We do not marvel that in some things he betrayed the infirmities of a man. The suspicions of his friends as to his integrity were calculated to hurry him into some expressions of haste, and to the adoption of some expressions in self-justification, which otherwise he would not have employed. Our text is the appeal of Elihu, and follows a very fine exhibition of that spirit which should attend us in our sorrows and trials, verses 31, 32. He then asks, "Should it be according to thy mind?" I observe,

I. We are naturally anxious that things should be according to our mind. This is a general, if not universal feeling. Sin entered our world on this principle, and by it, is extensively perpetuated. You see it in all ages; even children wish to have their own minds; see the headstrong youth; the young man; the person of mature years; the aged; all evidence this; all strive and contend for this; you see it in all stations, the rich and noble and affluent; those having rule and authority. But the same feelings extend to the poor, and the indigent. The learned and the illiterate are both living examples of this. This is the broad palpable mark of the profane; and it is the spot and infirmity of the religious and true servants of God.

II. We are totally unfit for deciding in the things which concern us. We are so because we are more influenced by passion than reason; because we are so darkened in our understandings and judgments; because we are at best so short sighted; because we are so influenced by sense, and present things. If things were left to our minds, we should never choose trials, disappointments, crosses, afflictions, bereavements. We should not be able to determine on our removal out of time. We should not court temptation, and chastisement, &c. Now all these are indispensable to our well-being, fruitfulness, and future safety. How well then is it for us, that we are not left to determine for ourselves! Besides our minds are so unsettled; we are so fickle, and vacillating. The mind we had for things years ago, is now altered. Our present mind will be modified, altered, or probably entirely changed by circumstances. Then how futile to desire that things should be according to our minds!

III. It is impossible that things can be according to the minds of all persons. Each one desires his own mind; but almost every one comes in collision with his neighbor. Now amongst ten thousand various minds, which is to have the ascendency? It is evident, that not more than one or two can be gratified out of the whole. So that all having their own minds is an impossibility. Why, men are not agreed on any one subject. Every man seeks his own things; confusion and clashing interests distract and divide our world. A scene of discord vastly worse than that of Babel, would rack and torture our world, if every man had liberty to obtain his own mind.

IV. How many have been ruined by having their own mind! Our first parents. The inhabitants of the old world resolved, in spite of the warnings of Noah, to eat and drink, &c., and were so found when the flood came. Lot had his own mind, when he selected the well-watered plain of Sodom for his abode; Pharaoh would have his own mind, and the sequel of his history is found in the overthrow of himself and hosts in the Red Sea; the children of Israel would have their own minds in the wilderness, and their apostacy and ruin was the consequence. Now, I appeal to you: Should children have their own minds? should culprits and malefactors? should violent, wrathful persons? If so, what misery and horror would fill our world! Is it not a fearful truth, that men choose the way of death and hell, and

thus perish forever, in naving their own minds?

V. It is infinitely better that one perfect mind should control the universe. Such a mind has God. It is clear, all-seeing, pure, wise, good, and just. He comprehends all, knows all, and can direct all things to a glorious consummation; he is ever of one mind, and never changes nor varies; his power is boundless, his resources infinite, his plans infallible. How delightful, then, that God reigns—reigns in heaven, on earth, and through the universe! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and he ruleth over all.

VI. It is our happiness and real well-being to be subject to God's mind. Religion says, "Thy will be done." In heaven all are agreed on this subject; not a discordant sentiment or feeling; and all do it. True religion leads to this. In conversion the sinner bows to God; as piety increases, the will of God is more clearly understood, and more cheerfully obeyed; the language of healthy and sincere Christians is just that of the Redeemer, "Not my will, but thine be done."

VII. Certain things may assist us in coming to this state of mind. A persuasion of our own incompetency, "It is not in man that walks to direct," &c.; a retrospect of God's goodness in reference to our past concerns, "Goodness and mercy have followed us," &c.; the daily presentation of our desires to God, "In all thy ways acknowledge," &c. "Commit thy way to the Lord," &c.; a conviction of the transitory character of earthly things, fashion of this world passing away—a looking to the things that are eternal.

THE WORSHIP OF THE HEAVENLY HOST.

"And the host of heaven worshippeth thee."—Nehemiah ix. 6.

Our text is connected with the solemn address of the Levites on a day of fasting and especial worship. It contains some of the most sublime thoughts that can possibly occupy the human mind. "Then the Levites," it is recorded, "said, Stand up and bless the Lord your God forever and ever; and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art Lord alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, and thou preservest them all; *and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.*" The contemplation of superior greatness and goodness has a tendency to elevate and improve the mind, and to inspire the soul with feelings of the loftiest and holiest emulation. Hence we are repeatedly called upon in scripture to consider the lives of those who have been distinguished for godliness, and to make them ensamples for our imitation. The apostle Paul calls upon us to consider the Old Testament worthies, that we may be followers of them who through faith and patience now inherit the promises; and the blessed Redeemer, in that inimitable prayer which he taught his disciples, also directed their thoughts to the holiness of angels—for that is clearly implied in that part of the Lord's prayer, where we are to pray that God's will may be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven; in other words, that man may be as holy, as spiritual, as obedient as angels; and, while Jesus Christ came expressly to shed his blood for human transgression, and turn aside the justly incurred wrath of the Most High, he also came to be our ensample, and "he hath left us," says the apostle, "an example that we should tread in his steps." Ou subject leads us to contemplate the angels of God, for it is quite clear that our text refers to angelic beings. Sometimes the term "host" is used in scripture to represent the stars; the starry host; the planets, those numerous magnificent worlds, which God has created in the immensity of space around us; but it is evident our text refers to intelligent beings—to those happy and blessed creatures, who were formed previous to our world's existence, and who have retained all their beauty, and dignity, and purity, and who are incessantly worshipping the God of heaven. Therefore, in our thoughts and meditations let us leave this earth, and travel upward to a higher state, even to the holiest place of all. Let us venture in the exercise of imagination, and by the power of faith, to ascend to that world where God has his immediate throne, and his resplendent dwelling-place; and there, by the assistance of our text, let us contemplate all the host of heaven worshipping God. Let us dwell for a little,

I. On the host itself.
II. On their employment. And,
III. The practical uses we should make of it.

I. The host itself. The existence of a class of beings, usually denominated angels, is obviously established in scripture. Reference is often made to them both in the Old and New Testament scriptures.

(1.) As to the *nature* of these beings. They are spirits—pure spirits; not clothed with material forms as man. "Who maketh his angels spirits," &c.

(2.) As to their *character*. They are described as perfectly wise, "Angels of light." As good and holy. They are said ever to be hearkening to the voice of God's word; to do his will. Holy angels; without spot; no imperfection.

(3.) Their *number*. Thousands of thousands; analogy from other parts of the creation.

(4.) As to their *orders*. They are called by very expressive titles—thrones, dominions, principalities, powers. We read also of archangels, seraphim, and cherubim. Some of the ancients thought there were nine orders, others eight, others four, and that the angels were under the dominion of archangels. We read, too, of Michael and his angels. We proceed to notice,

II. Their employments. They serve God; do the bidding of Jehovah. All eye to see—all ear to listen—all heart to love—all wing to fly; but, doubtless, one chief employment is to worship God. In scripture, we have some splendid exhibitions of this, Isaiah vi. 1, 2, Rev. iv. 6, 11. Now, their worship is lofty and dignified, holy and fervent, earnest and sincere, cheerful and incessant. We add, that with the angelic host there are united the spirits of the redeemed, who are made perfect; the souls of holy patriarchs and prophets, apostles, and confessors, and martyrs; and all who have died in the faith and hope of the gospel. Many of our friends and kindred; many of all ages and generations, countries, &c.; elevated to the society, and worship, and joys of the angels. One celestial corporation; one glorious assembly; one vast and happy family. The worship of the heavenly host differs from ours in many respects,

1. *As to the place.* The heaven of heavens; the holiest of all; throne of God in the midst; Deity immediately with them.

2. *As to its character.* More pure and spiritual; nothing gross appertaining to them; nothing indolent and lethargic; spiritual in the highest degree; burning with fervor; brilliant with intelligence; transparent with sincerity.

3. *It is peculiarly humble and lowly.* They stand before the throne as cheerful and ready attendants; they bow down before God, &c.; say nothing of themselves; cast their crowns before him, &c.

4. *Their worship is chiefly praise and adoration.* They extol God, bless him, praise him, adore, &c. All unite in one sublime chorus, "Blessing and power," &c. All their wants are supplied; no prayer; no confession; no supplication; no deprecation.

5. *Their worship is uninterrupted and eternal.* Day and night, &c. Filled with God; absorbed with God; rest in God; nothing above or beyond. Theirs is the fruition—the perfection of bliss.

6. *They seem to identify their worship with the works of God in connection with our world.* That is, they rejoice and adore God in the various displays of his glory with which they are favored. At the creation they sang together; they were the messengers to the patriarchs and prophets; attended at the giving of the law; announced the birth of the Redeemer; sang o'er the plains of Bethlehem; ministered to him in his temptation and agony; hailed his resurrection; were his convoy, &c.; rejoice in the conversion of sinners, &c.; will unite in the lofty acclamations of the glorified in heaven forever.

III. The practical uses to which our subject may be applied.

1. *It should inspire us with holy emulation.* To resemble them in their character, disposition, and employment.

2. *To think of them in our worship.* Could we then be cold and formal? How dignified, how precious, how sweet is divine worship!

3. *To rejoice in their friendship.* Bless God for their ministering to us. So to live,

4. *That we may be their companions forever.* Let us remember the gracious declaration of the Saviour—that his saints shall be equal to the angels. If so, how poor is this world! how inferior to our great destiny! how unworthy of our attach

ment! and how necessary is Christian diligence! how indispensable holiness of heart and life! how precious, the fountain opened, &c. There is another world, where there are hosts of angels, fallen, miserable, despairing, &c.; where they hate, blaspheme, and gnash their teeth, &c. "Choose ye, which shall be your companions forever."

NEW YEAR'S COUNSELS TO THE GODLY.

"Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."—PSALM xxxvii. 1–6.

OUR subject this morning may be properly denominated New Year's counsels. In the merciful providence of God, we have entered upon another year. These divisions of time are calculated to make impressions upon our minds;—and it will be well for us if these impressions are of a useful character, and if their influence is effective and permanent. I cannot conceive of a series of counsels more adapted really to do us good, than those which we have read, and which form the introductory part of this rich and beautiful psalm. Let us consider these counsels as they are presented to us in the text.

I. NOT TO BE PERTURBED OR ANGRY WITH THE WICKED. I have used the words perturbation and anger, as expressing the meaning of the word "fret." The Psalmist means, do not get your own souls into disorder and confusion, and lose temper and murmur, because of wicked men. Let us however not mistake this counsel. He does not mean that we are to be indifferent to the wicked and their course. The good man is to abhor sin, and hate every evil way; he is to pray, "Oh let the wickedness of the wicked," &c. "May thy will be done on earth," &c. But how often do men transfer their hatred of sin to the sinner; and how often do we allow our minds to be confused and irritated, and thus we add our sin to the sin of the wicked! We are in danger of showing a Pharisaical spirit, and acting as judges of others. We are in danger of assuming a prerogative which belongs to God alone. Look at the apostles James and John, who prayed for fire to consume those who did not receive their message. Forget not Christ's rebuke. "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." We are in danger of envying the wicked. "Neither be thou envious." Perhaps the blasphemer is in purple, and the man of prayer in poverty; the ungodly in the mansion, and the pious at his gates; Agrippa on the tribunal, and Paul in chains at the bar. Well, so it is, and it may often perplex us; but real Christianity precludes envy. To envy, is to sin; it is a fruit of the flesh; it is to destroy our own peace; it will corrode and eat out all enjoyment. "Then fret not, neither be envious," &c.

(1.) Because every man is accountable to God. Leave it with Jehovah.

(2.) We are sincerely to pity and commiserate their state; but if we are perturbed, and angry, and fretful, we cannot do so, &c.

(3.) Think how transient is their present state, verse 2. "For they shall soon be cut down," &c. What would you think of a person, who should visit a prison, where men under sentence of death were crowded together; and suppose the prisoners seemed merry, were clothed gorgeously, and gave each other high-sounding names. Would you fret or be envious? Impossible! would you not weep, would not your hearts ache, &c.? verses 9, 10.

II. WE ARE TO CONFIDE IN GOD, AND IMITATE HIS BENEVOLENCE. "Trust in the Lord," &c.; that is, depend on God—lean on the Lord—look to him for every blessing, &c.

(1.) Trust not in *yourselves*.

(2.) Trust not in *men*. Rich men or princes. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man."

(3.) Trust not in *riches*, or any of the adventitious circumstances of life. The world is a sea in ceaseless motion. Trust only in the Lord, and trust him wholly, and fully, and always, and for every thing, and forever. Trust the riches of his grace—and the kindness and sufficiency of his providence; and God shall protect thy life and satisfy thee with food; all things needful will be supplied; God will be thy friend and refuge. "And do good." To the bodies and souls of those around you.

Console the afflicted, relieve the widow, remember the poor, and offer Christ to all.

III. We are to make God the great object of our supreme joy and love. "Delight thyself," &c. Give God our first and chief regards. Look to him as the great source of all blessedness; as the fountain of blessings; meditate on his blessed character and perfection; live near to him by daily prayer and communion; seek his glory in all things; labor to exalt and please God. Do as Noah did, as Enoch did, as Abraham did, as Daniel did, as Jesus did, who ever pleased him. "And he shall give thee," &c. He shall make thee happy, &c. Every heart desires this; every soul thirsts and pants for it. Well, you shall have it; you shall feel his own peace keeping you, &c. His joy elevating, &c. His love shed abroad, &c.

IV. Give every thing up to be managed by the Lord. "Commit thy way," &c. The course of a person's life is his way. Two things are included.

1. *Our providential course.* The affairs of life. These we cannot manage ourselves. Boast not thyself of to-morrow. Look at that child in a vessel at sea; what would it do? Look at that stranger in a distant land with his guide. Look at that person with a case of legal difficulty. Now as a child commits itself to the captain of a vessel—as the stranger to his guide—the man with his suit to the advocate or counsellor—so we are to commit our way to the Lord, &c. Give up all for him to manage, &c.

2. *Our gracious and spiritual course.* The care of our souls. Our best interests, &c. He will manage it rightly, &c. Keep all secure, and bring us to eternal glory. All shall end well, everlastingly well. Let us regard these counsels. Meditate on them, and practise them, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Admonish the thoughtless.
2. Warn the unbelieving.
3. Direct the inquirer.

CHRISTIAN ESTABLISHMENT.

"Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God."—2 Corinthians i. 21.

Divine grace exerts a uniform influence on the human heart. The manner in which grace operates is very diversified, the instruments also various; but there is a similarity in the effects on the hearts of all who believe. The apostles, although inspired and distinguished by wonderful endowments and miraculous gifts, were still on the same level with other saints, as to the necessity and influence of grace on their souls. This is seen in the text. Now, "he who stablisheth us," &c. Let us look,

I. At the blessings experienced.

(1.) Established. There is of course a necessity for this. The tree planted must have time, &c., to take root and be established. The foundation laid, must have time to rest and settle, and be established. The seed sown must have space for sinking into the earth, taking root downward, and being established in order to fruitfulness, &c. The mind must have time to embrace truth and reflect upon it, &c., before man can be established. So with divine grace; time, means, and influence are necessary before Christians can be established.

(2.) Christian establishment is very necessary. It is necessary to our spiritual prosperity. To be moved and unsettled is to be incapable of religious improvement. "Unstable as water," &c.

(3.) It is necessary to our comfort. Vacillation is as wretched as unprofitable. Real peace, and fickleness, are incompatible.

(4.) It is essential to our safety. To be moved from the hope, &c., is to decline and apostatize. Ye did run well," &c. How essential—how important to be established; and this should include establishment in *knowledge*—divine knowledge—knowledge of Christ, and the way of salvation—knowledge of the great doctrines of the gospel, &c. To be men in knowledge. In *faith*. For faith to be strong, invulnerable, &c., that it may not fail. In *love*—love to God—love to his holy law—and in compassionate love to all men. In *obedience;* cheerfully and with heartfelt delight to obey God. To delight to do his will. In our *profession*. A city elevated, impregnable, set on a hill.

II. This establishment of the Christian is in Christ. "In Christ." All our privileges and blessings, &c., arise from our being in Christ. Our first parents had no stability in a state of innocency, much

less can we in our own imperfect frail nature; but in Christ our security is firm and sufficient. In his meritorious sacrifice we have the established favor of God to us. In his intercession the establishing influences of his Spirit. In his example, the established model for our perseverance. In his fulness, establishing grace in every time of need. The tree must have good soil. The Christian tree is planted into Christ. The stone of the structure must have a good foundation—Christ is the foundation stone—built on him—rests on him, &c.

III. THE AUTHOR OF THIS ESTABLISHMENT IS GOD. Now he, &c., "is God." Not ourselves, yet we must use the means. Not ministers, yet we must take heed to the word preached. Not angels, yet we may rejoice in their ministrations; but God is the source. "Every good gift," &c. Then three things are necessary.

1. *Dependence.* Trusting God. Believing God. He who does so shall never, &c. He will keep him in perfect peace.

2. *Prayer.* Seeking God's blessing. Waiting upon him. Imploring his daily help.

3. *Praise.* Grateful acknowledgment of the past, &c. Giving thanks continually to his name.

APPLICATION.

1. The most mature Christian still has need of deeper establishment.

2. Young Christians and new converts should be particularly solicitous for it.

THE ANOINTING.

"Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God."—2 CORINTHIANS i. 21.

VARIOUS are the figures by which the Holy Spirit is represented in the holy scriptures. He is compared to the air or wind. "The wind bloweth," &c. So when it rested on the apostles, &c. Thus God breathed into man, &c. So Christ to his disciples, after his resurrection, said, "Peace," and breathed on them, &c., John xx. 22. To fire; thus it rested on them as cloven tongues of fire. "But ye shall be baptized," &c. "Quench not the Spirit," &c. As water. "If any man thirst," &c. He spake of the Holy Spirit, &c. So also to oil. He shall be anointed with the oil of gladness, &c.; this is the idea the text contains. Believers are anointed of God, viz.: anointed with the Holy Ghost. See the uses to which oil was applied, and you will at once observe the propriety and beauty of the text.

I. THE SICK WERE ANOINTED IN ORDER TO HEALING. In the beautiful parable of the good Samaritan, oil and wine were poured into his wounds. See also James v. 14. Now in these is set forth the healing influences of the Holy Spirit. It is the work of God's Spirit to heal the broken hearted, Isaiah lxi. 3.

II. THE WEARY WERE REFRESHED BY THE APPLICATION OF OIL. In hot climates this was often indispensable to real comfort. It tended to cool and refresh the debilitated system. Thus David exclaimed, "Thou hast anointed my head with oil," &c. Thus Christ commended the penitent woman who poured on him the precious oil, and said to Simon the Pharisee, "My head with oil thou didst not anoint." Now the Holy Spirit refreshes the soul, revives it, inspirits it, and gives real vigor and comfort.

III. OIL WAS USED TO BEAUTIFY THE COUNTENANCE. One of the blessings acknowledged in the 104th Psalm is, "oil which maketh the face to shine." Now the Holy Spirit beautifies the soul. "He will beautify the meek," &c. David's prayer is to the point. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God," &c. Grace is the true beauty of the soul, it confers beauty which is pleasing to God, and abiding, and heavenly.

IV. OIL WAS USED IN ANOINTING FOR SACRED OFFICES.

1. Kings were anointed with oil. Believers are made kings unto God, they are destined to reign with Christ forever, to wear eternal crowns, to have an everlasting inheritance.

2. Priests were anointed with oil. Believers are a royal priesthood. Spiritual priests offering up spiritual sacrifices to the Lord. This qualifies them, and sanctifies their services, both of praise and prayer.

3. Prophets were anointed. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." Every Christian is to teach Jesus Christ. To witness for Christ, and by their conversation, and spirit, and life, to glorify Christ. The Holy Spirit must enable them to do this. Thus believers are anointed of God.

APPLICATION.

1. Examine yourselves.
2. Seek this.
3. Honor the anointing.

BEING SEALED.

"Who hath also sealed us."—2 CORINTHIANS i. 22.

IN our last discourse, we noticed the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and referred you to the Spirit's operations as likened to oil, on account of their healing, refreshing, beautifying, and consecrating influences. The apostle presents us, in the text, with another figure on the same subject. The Spirit is compared to a seal, and believers are represented as receiving the impression of it in their hearts. A few remarks on the use of seals will elucidate the subject to our minds.

I. SEALS WERE MADE USE OF TO RATIFY AND RENDER AUTHENTIC IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS. We have a reference to this in a civil contract, Jer. xxxii. 9, &c.; in reference to a national covenant, Nehemiah ix. 38. Now the gifts of divine grace, especially the blessings of the new covenant, are by the Spirit sealed over to believers; for the laws of this covenant are represented as being written on the hearts of believers, and to these the seal of the Spirit is attached.

II. SEALS WERE USED TO DISCRIMINATE AND MARK PROPERTY. Hence slaves had a mark of their own; valuable things had the impress of their owners' seals; see Ezek. ix. 4; Rev. vii. 2, &c. Now, it is by the spirit we possess, that our real character is truly known. If we are sons, or children of God, then God hath sent the Spirit of his Son, &c. "The Spirit itself beareth witness," &c.

III. SEALS WERE DESIGNED FOR THE PRESERVATION OF JEWELS, AND OTHER OBJECTS OF VALUE. Thus, cabinets of jewels are closed, and have the seal of the proprietor upon them; thus, the stone rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre was sealed, &c.; thus, confidential communications are sealed. Now, thus does the Spirit seal believers. "They are his jewels," &c.; his epistles. He only knoweth their value; the world knoweth them not. He knows and preserves. "None of them have I lost," &c. Our preservation and security are entirely of God. By the power of the Spirit are we kept, through faith, unto eternal salvation.

IV. BY THE SEAL SOME IMAGE OR DEVICE IS IMPRESSED. There is one prayer in the Canticles, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, and upon thine arm," &c. Now, the seal is the Spirit of God, and bears the full likeness of Deity; a spirit of light, truth, holiness, love, &c. In this image man was created. By the Holy Spirit this is renewed in the heart of the believer. He bears the impression of light, of truth, of holiness, of love. As the impression on the wax corresponds with the image on the seal, so the heart of the believer bears the impression of God's Spirit, and is thus sealed by it.

APPLICATION.

1. *Men exhibit the likeness of the spirit by which they are impressed.* Wicked men that of Satan. There is the impression of ignorance, delusion, iniquity, malevolence, &c. See this described, Gal. v. 19, &c.

2. *How we should cherish and honor the Holy Spirit.* By prayer, holy meditation, watchfulness, humility, and love. "Grieve not," &c.

3. *The subject affords much comfort.* Sealed to the day of redemption. How consolatory; how adapted to inspire hope, joy, &c.

THE EARNEST.

"And given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."—2 CORINTHIANS i. 22.

WE have previously considered the Holy Spirit under the figures of oil and a seal; we now have a third metaphorical representation, under the idea of an earnest. The word has reference to the hiring of servants, who at the period of their engagement receive a small sum of money, by which the agreement is ratified, and as the pledge of the reward, or wages, that shall be hereafter given. Now, the Holy Spirit is given to those who become the servants of God, on their reception into the divine family; and this gift is the earnest of what God will hereafter bestow upon them. This is more fully seen in Eph. i. 13, 14. We observe,

I. THE EARNEST IS THE SAME IN NATURE WITH THE FINAL REWARD. This is essential to an earnest. Now, the Holy Spirit

is thus, in the blessings he imparts, an earnest of eternal life; for this is the final gift—eternal life. Observe, then, some of the features of resemblance. The gift is,

1. *Everlasting spiritual existence, in opposition to the death of the sinner.* Now the earnest is the living spirit in the soul; spiritual life begun. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." This is the living water—the life of God within the soul.

2. *A reward of light.* Eternal noon-day splendor. Heaven needs not the light of the sun or moon, &c. God is the light of it; no night there. The Spirit dwells in the mind as a spirit of light; by it we are light in the Lord. "God, who commanded the light," &c. No longer darkness, &c.

3. *The reward is one of perfect purity.* No sin in heaven, the holy place; holiest of all—perfectly so. The Spirit dwells in the people of God, as the spirit of sanctification, transforming, purifying, cleansing, and making meet for the purity of heaven.

4. *The reward is one of celestial victory, and eternal triumph.* The upright have dominions, crowns, &c. "Unto him that overcometh," &c. Now, the Spirit dwells as an earnest in the heart of them; he imparts courage to the mind—power. By the Spirit, as with a sword, we slay all our adversaries. Our present conquests are those of the Holy Spirit within us.

5. *The reward is one of perfect love.* The infinite love of God to us, and the perfect love of God within us. Now, the Spirit dwells in the heart as an earnest of this. "The love of God is now shed abroad," &c. The Spirit enkindles, sustains, and perfects this love.

6. *The reward is one of unceasing joy and bliss.* There we shall obtain joy and gladness, &c. "Fulness of joy," &c. The Spirit dwells in the heart as an earnest of this. The fruit of the Spirit is joy. As the indwelling Comforter he produces this. It is sometimes unspeakable and full of glory. Thus we see as an earnest, it is of the same nature as the reward. Yet,

II. IT IS INFERIOR IN DEGREE. But a small portion of that reward. Now we know only in part; now very partially sanctified. It is but as the first sheaf to the great harvest—the drop to the shower—the dawn to the day.

III. IT IS THE GUARANTEE OF THE WHOLE. The rest must follow the earnest, unless the promiser dies, loses his ability, or acts unjustly. These are contingencies which cannot apply to Deity; therefore the earnest he gives of the Spirit, pledges most inevitably the whole reward.

APPLICATION.

1. *Have we the earnest of the Spirit? &c.* Do we possess a new spirit, different to what we formerly had? a spirit delighting in God, his word, ordinances, prayer?

2. *Let us rejoice in it.* How precious in itself, and also in reference to the eternity before us.

3. *By faith in the gospel, the Holy Ghost is imparted as an earnest.*

SCRIPTURAL ASSURANCE, &c.

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."—2 TIMOTHY i. 12.

TRUE religion is of heavenly origin, and is at utter variance with the spirit and principles of this world; true religion generally exposes its possessors to persecution and trouble for Christ and conscience' sake; but true religion has within itself the elements of comfortable experience, sufficient to sustain the mind in the deepest sorrows and severest afflictions. Let us see these verities exemplified in Paul. His religion was of God—the light and truth of heaven, and it was essentially different to every form of religion then in the world. As a Christian, Paul suffered the loss of all things for his Lord and Master. How long and afflictive the catalogue of his sorrows! but the internal principles of divine grace caused him to rejoice in all his tribulation, and at last to lay down his neck for the testimony of Jesus. This brings us at once to the text. Now a prisoner—ready to die. "For the which cause," &c. Our text is expressive of the essentials of evangelical experimental religion, and in that light we shall consider it.

I. A KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST IS THE FIRST GRAND ESSENTIAL IN EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION. "I know whom," &c. The knowledge of Christ is the essence of knowledge; it is knowledge of the highest and most precious kind. Knowledge of letters—of science—of nature—of languages, all are valuable, but none to compare to the know-

ledge of Jesus. What say the scriptures? "This is life eternal." "Yea, doubtless," &c. But this knowledge of Christ must,

1. *Be scriptural.* Know him as he is revealed in the holy, living word; the scriptures testify of Christ. We know nothing rightly, perfectly, unless we appeal to the sacred testimony. His nature, person, offices, work, and glory, are all exhibited. The Bible is the word of Christ; the field of the precious pearl; the mirror where Christ is visibly beheld. But this knowledge,

2. *Must be personal.* "I know." Not my minister, or my teacher, or my friends; but my understanding, my judgment, my mind, and spirit are acquainted with Christ.

3. *It must be saving.* Know him as my Redeemer, by the freedom into which he brings my spirit, "If the Son make you free," &c.; by the forgiveness of my sin, "He came to give the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sin;" by his purifying grace, "If I wash thee not," &c. Thus, the blind beggar might know much by hearing of Christ, but much more when Christ had said, "Receive thy sight." Thus, the Samaritans knew something from the woman who had talked with Christ, but much more when they came to him. Such know Christ, who can say, "We have found him of whom," &c. "My beloved is mine." "My Lord and my God."

II. FAITH IN CHRIST IS EVER CONNECTED WITH THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS. "I know *whom* I have believed." Believed what?

1. *What Christ has said.* Said of my sinfulness—my misery—my ruin. My help is in himself; what he has said; his love, and grace, and readiness to save. Believed what? Why,

2. *What he has done.* Became a man, and poor; suffered, died, rose again, and ever lives, &c. Believed what?

3. *What he has promised.* Present mercy; sufficient grace; eternal glory.

III. FAITH IN CHRIST SURRENDERS THE CHRISTIAN'S ALL INTO CHRIST'S HANDS. The salvation of the soul may be justly considered as comprising the Christian's all, for this is really and truly every thing; but the entire person of the Christian is committed—soul and body. The believer gives himself; his whole undivided self.

(1.) To be preserved and kept by the power of God.

(2.) To be fully laid out for Christ's glory.

(3.) To be sanctified and fitted for future bliss.

IV. THE CHRISTIAN IS FIRMLY PERSUADED OF THE SECURITY OF THAT WHICH IS COMMITTED TO JESUS. Whence arises this persuasion?

1. *From the ability and love of Christ.* His heart is set upon the eternal salvation of his people, and he has all power to do it. He can work, and none can hinder; this will be Christ's eternal joy and reward.

2. *From the past experience of Christ's goodness.* What has he not done? Look at guilt cancelled—debts forgiven—iniquities cleansed—blessings pure and divine imparted—mercies continued. Past safety; past help.

3. *From the unvarying testimony of the saints in all ages.* Was Enoch disappointed? or Jacob? or David? or Simeon? or Stephen? or the martyred saints now in heaven?

V. THE CHRISTIAN HAS ESPECIAL RESPECT TO THE LAST DAY. "Till that day." He refers to the same, verse 18, in reference to Onesiphorus; a day in which Christ will vindicate, confess, and publicly reward his disciples; the day of the saint's coronation, reward, and glory. Then Jesus will surrender all that has been committed to him, and say, These I have pardoned, sanctified, and kept, and not one is lost save the son of perdition.

APPLICATION.

1. *Have you this knowledge and firm persuasion?* Are you looking to that day?

2. *Let each one commit his all to Christ.*

HOW TO TREAT OFFENCES.

"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone," &c.—MATTHEW xviii. 15–18.

THE best of men are but partially sanctified, and therefore are surrounded by infirmities. Such being the case, intercourse cannot be kept up without offences; such will occur, even among the great, and the wise, and good; but New Testament direction is fully, explicitly, and clearly given, how we should act under these circumstances. The directions are the very op-

posite of the feelings of the human mind, contrary to our carnal hearts, and contrary to the course very often taken. Persons often, when offended, become morose and reserved, avoiding the person; or they become vindictive, and try to injure them; or they become angry, and express in passion their displeasure. All this is wrong, evil, to all concerned. Observe the method Christ has laid down.

I. THE TRESPASS SUPPOSED, WHETHER ACCIDENTAL OR DESIGNED. Whether it regards reputation, or property, or feelings, &c. Then, the direction given:

II. SEEK A PRIVATE INTERVIEW. That he may explain, if possible. Better adapted for him to confess. More faithfully and affectionately admonished. State to him plainly, candidly, yet kindly. The motive; you may gain, convince, convert him to a friend, deliver from sin.

III. IF THIS FAIL, TAKE ONE OR TWO MORE. Let them be unobjectionable persons—peaceable persons—prudent persons. These are to witness, and aid by their counsel and influence. If this fail,

IV. BRING IT TO THE CHURCH. Let the brethren decide. Do so for these reasons.

1. For the offender's sake. He may hear the church.

2. For Christianity's sake.

3. For the world's sake, that they may see we are neither indifferent nor malevolent. If he refuse to hear the church, then he must,

V. BE REMOVED FROM CHRISTIAN COMMUNION. This is the last act, and if this is rightly done, it is ratified in heaven, verse 18. Do not let us neglect this order. You object. He is not worthy of all this, &c. This is troublesome, &c.; but it is your duty; Christ demands it!

ADMONITION.

"Admonish him as a brother."—2 THESSALONIANS iii. 15.

To admonish, signifies to warn, to reprove gently, &c. The context supposes that some might disobey the epistle, and he then states the course that should be pursued, verse 14. Observe,

I. IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THERE WILL BE CASES REQUIRING ADMONITION. Always been so. So with the apostles, and with the purest church in the world. Ignorance, imperfect graces, temptations, &c., all tend to this. Men drawn aside, &c.

II. ON WHOM DOES THE DUTY OF ADMONITION DEVOLVE.

1. *It devolves on some persons officially.* On ministers and elders of the church; on parents and teachers.

2. On the experienced venerable Christian. In some instances, on all believers.

III. THE WAY IN WHICH ADMONITION SHOULD BE GIVEN.

1. *The admonitor should be free from the evils on which he admonishes, or his admonition will be powerless, &c.*

2. *He must select an appropriate place and opportunity.*

3. *He must do it in the spirit of Christ, and not in his own spirit.*

4. *He must do it confidentially, and not make it the subject of conversation.* Where admonition fails, there must be rebuke, and if that fails, it must be told to the church.

IV. MOTIVES BY WHICH THIS DUTY MAY BE ENFORCED.

1. *The relation of the person admonished.* He is our brother; so we ought to feel and care, &c. If sick, or in danger, &c. How much more when the soul, &c.

2. *For the sake of the church of Christ.* We would not that men should apostatize, &c. Satan triumphs; world rejoices, &c.

3. *For our own sake.* We should be condemned, if we saw a man on the verge of peril, and did not cry out, &c. We shall be guilty, &c. Objections to this duty,

1. *It more properly belongs to the minister.* He cannot know every instance, &c.

2. *It will give offence.* Much depends on the spirit, &c. I know persons who constantly do it, and do not offend.

3. *We feel it painful, &c.* But it is not the less necessary, &c. Let all Christians do so to those who are without. Let us warn, entreat, &c.

THE WEAK, &c., COMFORTED.

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench."—MATTHEW xii. 20

OUR text must be particularly familiar to every one who reads with attention the holy scriptures. We first meet with it in the forty-second chapter of Isaiah's pro-

phecy; and here in the gospel by Matthew, we see its direct and appropriate application to the Messiah, the friend of sinners, who came expressly to seek and to save, &c. Let us inquire,

I. What the metaphors in the text signify. And,

II. What the declaration in the text includes.

I. What the metaphors in the text signify. The metaphors are two, but alike in spirit and signification.

1. *The bruised reed.* May refer to the musical reed, extensively used by the eastern shepherds while tending their flocks; or it may refer to the common reed, which is easily blown down and crushed. In the one case, the musical reed ceases to yield melodious sounds if crushed, or the common one to be of any use when bruised.

2. *The smoking flax.* Refers to the wick of the lamp, which is just expiring for want of oil, when light is scarcely emitted, and when the odor is offensive. Both metaphors refer to the same spirit, character, and state.

1. *They may be appropriately used to denote the broken-hearted penitent.* The soul crushed with a sense of sin, and an awful apprehension of the divine wrath; the heart which has yielded before the hammer of divine truth; the pierced contrite heart; the lowly abased spirit, where all self-exaltation is dethroned; the whole soul bowed down before God. When the tongue confesses, and the soul loathes its sinful state.

2. *They may perhaps indicate, more directly, a weak and imperfect state of grace.* A low state of spiritual attainment. Where there is little knowledge—little vigor—flickering hope—much weakness and instability, confidence and peace only very imperfectly enjoyed. Or,

3. *A condition of extreme trouble and distress.* Afflictions sometimes bring us low; troubles and trials, especially if they come wave after wave. When the clouds appear after the rain—keen tempest, &c. Let us notice, then,

II. What the declaration of the text includes. Observe, it is negative. He will not break—not quench. The shepherd finds his reed crushed, and as he can easily supply its place, he breaks it and throws it aside; or the husbandman sees the reed beneath his foot, and disregards it. The flickering light, or merely smoking flax, is extinguished. Not so Christ. He will not break, &c.

1. *He never has done so.* The history of the church contains not one instance; the history of his life, not one case. See how he acted to his disciples—to the afflicted poor. All was pity, kindness, compassion, mercy, gentleness. So you all have felt it, to you.

2. *He never will do so.* For it would be contrary to his nature—to his office—to his delights and enjoyments.

3. *He will do the very opposite of this.* He will bind up and restore—he will heal and strengthen—he will encourage and revive—he will raise up and enliven. Then our subject,

1. *Encourages the timid and fearful.* Christ is as compassionate as he is great—as tender as he is glorious. Go to him by prayer. Cast your souls upon him.

2. *None shall be destroyed but the impenitent.* And because they despise the Saviour.

CHRISTIAN HOPE ACCOUNTED FOR.

"And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."—1 Peter iii. 15.

True religion must not only be enjoyed, but professed; Christ is to be put on; we are to confess him before men; our light is to shine for the good of others; we are to be Christ's witnesses, and confessors to the people. In doing this, the water of life within us springs up, and sends its stream abroad for the good of all around. But more is required of us than even profession; we are to stand forth to vindicate the religion we profess; we are, if necessary, to be disputants in the cause of Christianity; we are to "be ready," &c. Four propositions will bring the subject of the text before us.

I. Christians have a hope within them. Hope is the expectation of future good; it differs, however, from wishing, or desiring. It is an expectation grounded on what is possible and probable, yea, the certainty of what is satisfactorily established. Christians are the children of hope; unbelievers the slaves of fear. The apostle thus speaks,

"Blessed be God," &c., 1 Peter i. 3. The Christian's hope has respect to four things:

1. *An interest in the arrangements of a benignant providence.* The God of providence is the God of grace. Those who are the subjects of his grace are especially interested in a kind and beneficent providence. Of such Christ speaks, when he says, "The very hairs of your head," &c. "The ways of such are ordered by the Lord." "The Lord keepeth them in the hollow of his hand." "If they commit their way to him," &c. "No weapon formed against them," &c.

2. *A full supply of all spiritual blessings.* This supply includes all that they can possibly need, in every condition of their pilgrimage to a better world. Their hope embraces that gracious declaration, "My God shall supply," &c. "The Lord God is a sun," &c.

3. *A safe and blessed dissolution.* Christians have not always an easy transition; not always a triumphant one; but always a safe one; one of peace and hope. "The righteous hath hope in his death."

4. *A certain glorious resurrection, and eternal life.* The hope of eternal life is the grand consummation—the glorious issue—the full redemption of body and soul forever.

II. CHRISTIANS HAVE REASONS FOR THE HOPE THAT IS WITHIN THEM. These reasons are many; but we refer to the three chief:—

1. *A persuasion of the truth of God's word.* They hope for these things, because they are revealed in the scriptures—published and offered there. There the foundation, the medium, and the certainty of salvation, both present and eternal, are made known. Now, the Christian believes most firmly the truth of this volume; he considers it as God's own word, and he rests on it as an immoveable rock. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord endureth forever." Another reason is,

2. *The experience of true religion in the soul.* There is the harmony of their experience with the word of God. They have tested the gospel. It is represented as a word of light—and they are enlightened; a word of power—and their rocky hearts have been broken; a word of mercy—and their guilt they feel to be cancelled; a word of purity—and their evil hearts are cleansed; a word of comfort and joy—and they have peace; the word of Christ—and Christ is now within their hearts, the hope of glory. Another reason is,

3. *The concurring testimony of all believers.* The experience of one Christian is in the main the testimony of all; the general external and internal effects are the same. Persons of all grades, &c., profess to know, to feel, and to enjoy the same. Hence, in the mouths of many witnesses is the reality of religion established.

III. CHRISTIANS MAY BE CALLED UPON TO GIVE A REASON OF THEIR HOPES TO OTHERS.

1. *Fellow-Christians may ask this for their own edification.* "They that feared the Lord," &c.

2. *Penitent inquirers may ask, for their direction and encouragement.* "They shall come seeking, &c., inquiring their way to Zion," &c.

3. *Infidels may ask, to scoff and rail at religion.* To mock; to gainsay. Now observe,

IV. TO THESE INQUIRERS WE ARE TO GIVE AN ANSWER.

1. *We must be able to do it.* Not ignorant of the great grounds and principles of our faith and hope. Religion not a blind thing, &c.—not mere feeling.

2. *We must be ready to do it.* Have the mind to do it. Not be afraid, nor ashamed, nor reluctant, &c.

3. *We must do it in a right manner.* "With meekness." A calm, quiet spirit; a modest manner. Not ostentatiously; not self-complacently; but with meekness. "With fear;" that is, solemnly—seriously; with reverence for God and the truth. Not flippantly; not with levity, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let the Christian rejoice in his hope.* How rich, blessed, and certain! It ought to lift him up; make him always rejoice, Rom. xv. 13.

2. *This hope is within the reach of all.* Christ is the hope; he is offered to you, &c.

3. *Do not reject Christianity until you have a substitute.*

PENITENCE AND EXPECTED MERCY.

"Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"—JONAH iii. 9.

Our text relates to Nineveh. Nineveh was a dark, benighted, pagan city, densely populated, and aggravatingly wicked. To this city, Jonah, the prophet, was sent to preach repentance, ere their sins brought upon them the destroying wrath of the Most High. On the preaching of Jonah, the people were convinced of their sins, and fasting, repentance, and prayer were presented to God, that his wrath might be stayed. This humiliation was general, from the king on the throne to the poorest of the city. The king also set the people an example of pious penitence, verse 5. Observe the connection between the text, and the sermon of Jonah, verses 3 and 4. How wise and admirable was the course the Ninevites adopted! What an example for Christian nations and cities! Let us see how it will bear on the condition of every sinner now before God. Three propositions will open the subject to our minds and hearts.

I. As fallen beings, we have all greatly sinned against the Lord.

II. That wrath is threatened against every transgressor. But,

III. There is every reason to believe that sincere repentance may avert the doom threatened.

I. As fallen beings, we have all greatly sinned against the Lord. This is the unvarying doctrine of the scriptures. It applies to all mankind, of every age and nation; of course, it applies to every person in this congregation. When the mind has been enlightened, it is seen and felt. Ignorance of this truth argues that great darkness overspreads the mind. How important that every one should know the plague of his own heart: general statements not enough. To know, to feel, and confess I have sinned, and done wickedly.

1. *We have sinned.* Against both tables of the law—by commission and omission; against the divine government; against redeeming love; against the economy of grace; against the glorious gospel; against the Holy Spirit; against the light and convictions of our consciences! Who can plead exemption? Not one.

2. *We have all greatly sinned.* Both in number, magnitude, and aggravation. Against great light, and great mercies; against a great God; against repeated resolutions. Our sins are like a great mountain—a great cloud—a universal disease. Our sins have been of ingratitude, rebellion, and treason, for all sin includes these. Then many have sinned for years, many years; through youth, through maturer years, even to old age. Well would the lamentation of Isaiah suit us, "Wo is us! wo is us!"

II. That wrath is threatened against every transgressor. God necessarily disapproves, hates, and abhors all sin. As a just and righteous sovereign and lawgiver, he is bound to punish it. His word contains his denunciation against every persevering, impenitent sinner. This wrath involves three things:—

1. *God's righteous disapprobation in this life.* His face is set against the wicked; he is angry with them. Say unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him. "He that believeth not," &c. Every day and moment God is displeased, justly displeased with the sinner.

2. *His curse in the hour of dissolution.* "The wicked are driven away," &c. "The candle of the wicked is put out," &c. His death brings him into the presence of his Judge. How fearful is this How intolerable the idea!

> "What scenes of horror and of dread
> Await the sinner's dying bed;
> Death's terrors all appear in sight
> Presages of eternal night!
>
> "Tormenting pangs distract his breast,
> Where'er he turns he finds no rest,
> Death strikes the blow, he groans and cries
> And in despair and horror dies."

3. *His fearful wrath through all eternity.* Let a few passages suffice here. "The wicked shall be turned into hell," &c. "Upon the wicked God shall rain fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest." "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." "These on the left hand of the Judge shall go into everlasting punishment," &c. There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and there the worm dieth not, nor is the fire quenched. Oh, think of eternal horror, eternal pain, eternal agonies, eternal despair! But I hasten with joy,

III. To observe that we have every reason to believe that sincere penitence may avert the destruction threatened. Literally, God is not a man that he should

·epent, &c. He is of one mind, the same yesterday, &c. "I am the Lord, and change not." But this is a settled principle in his moral government under the gospel, that sincere penitence shall avert the deserved wrath. Observe, this is,

1. *Peculiar to the gospel.* The law does not recognise this; it says, Obey and live; disobey and die! It will not be satisfied with sorrow or amendment; indeed, it cannot. But the gospel reveals a Mediator between God and man; one who has propitiated by his death; one who has borne the desert of sin. A surety, and through his merit, God can be just, &c. "Through this man is preached," &c. The penitence which is effectual,

2. *Must be the effect of the truth upon the conscience.* We have a beautiful instance in the case of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost. They heard, understood, felt, cried out, and became the recipients of the divine mercy. Thus the word acts as a hammer, &c. Christ crucified is to be preached in connection with this. "They shall look on him," &c.

3. *This penitence must be deep and sincere.* Not a mere emotion; not a transitory sensation; not a slight impulse, but a sincere feeling in the whole soul. The ardent action of the whole mind. See it in the penitent woman, her shame, her tears, her contrition.

4. *It must be influential.* Work repentance, or change of mind and life. Bring forth fruits meet, &c. The case of the Ninevites. Humiliation, fasting, confession, prayer, &c. Now such penitence shall avail.

(1.) God has said it. "To that man will I look, who is of a contrite spirit." "The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit," &c. "Blessed are they that mourn."

(2.) Sacred history, and the experience of the whole church of Christ, establish it. When did it not prevail? When was the penitent spurned, rejected, cast out, denied? Who ever perished, however vile, worthless? &c.

APPLICATION.

1. There is no alternative between penitence and death.

2. Now consider, reflect, and live to God.

3. To all is the offer of mercy sent.

GOD'S PARDONING MERCY CELEBRATED.

"And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me."—ISAIAH xii. 1.

IT is evident that the preceding chapter relates to the reign and kingdom of Messiah. The latter end of the chapter clearly relates to the ingathering of the Jews—a time yet to come—a period which will be the spiritual jubilee to the tribes of Israel, and the beginning of the millennium to the world itself. The text refers to the happy and delightful expressions of grateful confidence, which shall be ascribed to the Lord God of Israel. "And in that day," &c. Now while this is clearly the meaning of the passage, yet it is capable without any torturing of a personal application. The text may be assumed by every believer—by every spiritual child of Abraham; as such we shall treat it on the present occasion. We have,

I. A PREVIOUS STATE REFERRED TO. "Thou wast angry with me." When we speak of anger in Deity, it is not to be supposed that he is influenced by passion as we are. The term indicates his disapprobation and determination to punish. This disapprobation, &c., is never excited towards any beings, but in accordance with his settled equity and holiness of character. God is righteous in all his ways, and just in all his dispensations. We notice,

1. *That man's character and conduct, while in his natural state, are such as justly to expose him to the divine anger.* What does God survey in the sinner? Ignorance, unbelief, enmity, malevolence, impurity. Not a redeeming trait, &c. Not a lovely feature. His conduct is exceedingly displeasing to God; he returns not for the mercies received; he acknowledges no divine benefits, he reverences not God, he yields no obedience; he does not what God justly and reasonably expects from his rational creatures. Then he breaks his laws, violates his statutes, and does those things which God has sacredly forbidden to be done. In addition to this, he abuses his long-suffering, and despises his mercy. He rejects the gracious message of the gospel, and puts to death again the Son of God. We ask,

2. *How may rational intelligent beings be*

sensible that they are the objects of the divine anger? "Thou wast angry with me." Now this is clearly revealed in God's holy word. "God is angry," &c. He has expressed it in the most striking and varied language. "His face is set against them that do evil." Then this is ratified by the workings of conscience. Let any one do good secretly, and contrast his state of mind with the feelings arising after the commission of secret evil. In both cases, the cognizance of man shall not be included. What a difference! day and night—bliss and anguish—heaven and hell, do not form greater contrasts.

3. *The divine anger is of all things most to be deprecated.* Only observe what has been the effect of the divine anger to impenitent sinners. Think of the old world; of Pharaoh and the Egyptians; of Sodom, &c. View it written in indelible and awful characters in the history of the Israelites. See the scriptural definitions and figurative representations. It is a desolating flood—a horrible tempest—a devouring fire; nothing can resist it—nothing alleviate it—nothing extricate the victims of it; and to the finally incorrigible it will rage with desolating and eternal fury. But notice,

II. THE DELIGHTFUL CHANGE EXPERIENCED. "Thine anger is turned away," &c. This change is experienced in a two-fold form.

1. *The divine displeasure is removed.* "Anger turned away." The cloud blotted out; no longer under condemnation, &c. This necessarily supposes a change in the creature. His enmity and opposition to God have ceased; he has seen the evil of sin; confessed and forsaken it; and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. A state of unbelief involves us beneath the divine wrath; a state of faith brings us from this dire condition. God abhors the high and proud spirit; but he looks in pity upon the lowly and contrite.

2. *The divine favor is enjoyed.* "Thou comfortest me." We cannot stand in a neutral state with respect to Deity. The instant his anger is removed his favor is enjoyed. This comfort is the light of the divine countenance—it is the possession of the Holy Ghost; the dove of peace and comfort hovers over the soul. Now guilt, remorse, and the burden of sin are gone, and there is in their stead the smile—the blessing of God. This comfort is real, not visionary; suitable, abiding, and inexpressibly precious; and it is associated with all good, both in this life and in that which is to come. It is the precursor of everlasting felicity. Observe,

III. THE GRATEFUL RETURN PRESENTED. "I will praise thee." Acceptable praise includes,

1. *The offering of a thankful heart.* It must arise from within; it must have to do with the affections of the soul. Heart gratitude is alone real, and that which God will receive.

2. *It must be free and spontaneous.* "I will." Not I ought, or should, but "I will." I feel borne away with the principle of grateful love to God. This feeling fills the soul; absorbs all its faculties.

3. *It must be constant.* Never out of time, or unreasonable. "In every thing give thanks." In secret; in the domestic circle; in the social means of grace; in the public ordinances, &c. "I will praise thee every day," &c. Praise God always, in health and sickness, death and eternally.

4. *It must be practical.*

5. *It will be eternal.* "Unto him who hath loved us," &c.

APPLICATION.

Let the text be,

1. *The test of our state.* Can we use it? Is it so with us? Is God our reconciled friend?

2. *The test of our spirit and conduct.* Do we love and bless God? Is it our delight to do so?

3. *Let it be attractive to the convicted, mourning sinner.* There is a way to divine peace, and to real and heavenly comfort. Christ is that way. Come now to God through him.

PREACHING CHRIST

"Whom we preach."—COLOSSIANS i. 28

IN the erection of a building, one of the chief and most important matters is the foundation; for if the foundation fail, how can the building stand? In the construction of an arch, the key-stone is that which holds the whole in security. Most systems have their main principles, their cardinal

truths. In the human body, some parts are vitally important; in our existence, bread is the staff of life; but you ask, what mean these disconnected observations? I reply, in preaching, Christ is all this to the excellency and value of the sermon. Our discourses are evangelically deficient if Christ is not the foundation—the key-stone—the grand principle and essential truth of the Christian system—the true, living bread of the world. In preaching or suffering, Christ was all to the apostle—"We preach not ourselves," &c. He avowed his desire not only to win Christ, but to have fellowship with him in his sufferings. All his epistles are full of Jesus Christ. This is pre-eminently the case with this epistle. He dwells on his sacrifice, dignity, &c., and then adds in the 27th verse, "To whom God would make known," &c. We preach,

I. All Christ.
II. Christ to all.
III. Christ always. We preach,

I. All Christ. In other words, a "whole Christ." We claim for him,

1. *The highest dignity and glory.* He was the angel of Jehovah's presence to the Jews, and he is to us Christians, God over all, blessed, &c. He holds no inferiority to the eternal Father, but claims perfect, essential, unbounded, and everlasting equality. "He thought it not robbery," &c. He is "Immanuel, God with us." His throne is the highest, at the Father's right hand,—the throne of the universe. His authority is illimitable. He created all things—upholds all things—preserves all things—and by him all things consist. On his head are many crowns; the ascriptions of the redeemed, and of seraphim and cherubim, are incessantly given to him "whom we preach." Notice,

2. *We preach him in his perfect humanity and abasement.* A true man; made like unto his brethren, &c.; bone of our bone, &c.; really the second Adam; and in his abasement, we refer to Bethlehem—the stable—the manger—poverty—slander—persecution—at last death. "He humbled himself to death, even the death of the cross." He died as a thief, or a murderer; on a cross between heaven and earth—between two malefactors, &c. "Whom we preach,"

3. *In the glory of his offices.*

(1.) Divine offices as ruler, &c.; but especially his mediatorial offices, as the prophet and apostle of the world.

(2.) As a priest, presenting one sacrifice for man's transgression.

(3.) As the King of Zion, establishing an empire of truth and righteousness, of peace and love on the earth. These offices meet a world's wants.

i. Dark; he illuminates it by his truth.

ii. Lost; he saves it by his death.

iii. In rebellion, he subdues and governs it by his grace. "Whom we preach,"

4. *In his sacrificial obedience and merit.* In his divine and human natures he possesses infinite dignity; in his obedience and righteousness, God's eyes rest on immaculate holiness. His blood has expiatory virtue, and his life once offered removes the curse, and rolls it from our world. The whole is expressed by Isaiah, "All we like sheep," &c., and sung by the redeemed, "Unto him who loved us," &c. "Whom we preach,"

5. *In his illustrious triumphs.* He triumphed over error by his doctrines; over temptations by his endurance; over malice by his meekness; over diseases, death, and devils, by his miracles; over sin by his death; over the grave by his resurrection; and over souls by his gospel and love. Who does not unite with the poet,

"Oh! Jesus, ride on, till all are subdued," &c

But,

II. We preach Christ to all.

1. *All stand in need of Christ.* None righteous, &c.; none sufficient to save themselves; no other Saviour for any. Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and eternal life, are nowhere but in Christ. "Whom we preach to all,"

2. *For he is the Saviour of all.* Brother of all; lived for all; died for all. He has the nature of all in the holy place. "Whom we preach to all,"

3. *For he has sent his gospel to all.* The world is the extent of his commission:—

"Wide as the world is his command,
Vast as eternity his love."

"Whom we preach to all,"

4. *Of every class and rank.*

(1.) Civil—monarch, beggar, rich, poor.

(2.) Mental—philosopher, illiterate, civilized, savage.

(3.) Moral—the orderly and the rude,

the correct and the profligate, the best and the worst; also to all ages. We invite children to sing their hosannas to Christ: we entreat the aged to take Jesus in their arms by faith, &c.

III. We preach Christ always. We desire Christ to find a place in every discourse, and to be its life and glory. "We preach Christ,"

1. *As the essence of all doctrines.* Justification; regeneration; sanctification.

2. *As the substance of all blessings.* Pardon; peace; hope; joy.

3. *As the beginning and end of all duties.* Obedience begins with believing in him, and ends in living to him.

4. *As the model of all virtues.* His life and conversation quite perfect. Practical lessons of humility, self-government, lowliness, courtesy, gentleness, fortitude, goodness.

5. *As the sum of all enjoyment.* Ask the forgiven penitent, "I will praise," &c. Ask the tranquil believer, "The peace of God," &c. Ask the dying Christian, "To die is gain." Ask the beatified spirit, "With the Lord to enjoy him; to see him as he is."

APPLICATION.

1. *Is Christ yours?* Have you received him? Does he dwell in you?

2. *Are you Christ's?* Your hearts, lives, possessions—all.

3. *Who will become Christ's to-day?* For to you is the word of this salvation sent.

THE HELP OF GOD FOR HIS OWN CAUSE PLEADED.

"Arise, O God! plead thine own cause." - Psalm lxxiv. 22

True religion identifies a man with the things of God. No man who loves God can live to himself, &c. A good man is concerned for the divine glory. His feelings are depressed or exalted, as God is honored or despised. True piety throws its powers of vision through the universe, and rejoices in all that reflects the mind of God, and weeps over the misery, and sin, and ruin which darken so many portions of our world. In the midst of the evil that exists, he perceives the hand of God working, resisting the violence of Satan, circumscribing the limits of human wrath, and giving exercise to the powerful elements of truth and holiness. Beholding this, the good man's energies are aroused, his spirit encouraged, his ardor excited, and he gives utterance to the prayer of the text, "Arise, O God!" &c. We remark,

I. God has a cause in our world. The affairs of the universe are in his hands. Our world is a part of that universe. He made it; he upholds it; he governs it. It is under his cognizance; regulated by his agencies, &c. But morally, our world is in a state of revolution. Satan introduced into it the elements of moral evil. By it, it became the region of crime, darkness, misery, and death. To counteract this revolt, and remove its effects, God mercifully set up a cause in our world—a remedial system—a system of restoration to truth, holiness, and salvation. Now, this cause is based on the redeeming love of God; on the mission of Christ into our world; on the setting up of Christ's kingdom, so as to overthrow the kingdom of the evil one. The cause of God and his church are the same. The church is to be the instrument for carrying out Jehovah's designs. God, by his Holy Spirit, dwells in the church, and thus perpetuates and gives efficacy to its influence and exertions.

II. The cause of God in our world is distinguished by certain striking characteristics.

1. *It is distinguished for its knowledge.* Cause of light, and therefore it is bearing down the darkness of the world. Ignorance is the citadel of Satan's kingdom. God is light; diffuses light; makes his church the instrument of light. The seven churches of Asia were likened to seven golden candlesticks. "Ye are the light of the world." "Cities," &c. The church is to arise and shine, &c. Now the word of the divine truth is the light of the church.

2. *It is distinguished for its holiness.* The church is separated from the mass, and is holy to the Lord. Called to holiness; invested with holiness; to exhibit holiness. Thus it is to condemn the sin and defilement of the world, and like salt to save it from corruption and ruin.

3. *It is distinguished for its benevolence.* It embodies the sentiments of the song of the angels at the birth of the Redeemer, "Glory to God," &c. Its aspect towards heaven is purity—towards earth, goodness. Now sin produced misery to man; to his body and spirit; to man personally, rela-

tively, &c. Religion breathes love, peace, goodness; it exercises candor, mercy, compassion, pity, and tenderness; it sacrifices self, and lives and works for others. Now, the influence of this benevolence is to diffuse happiness through our world. As sin has rendered man a curse to his fellow-creatures, religion makes him a blessing.

III. The cause of God, though comprising many elements, is yet one. Tyranny and despotism have cursed our world, crushed many thousands beneath their cruel yoke. Liberty, therefore, is the cause of God; freedom of limb and conscience are the unalienable prerogatives of man. War has made our earth drunk with the crimson fluid of life, and is opposed to God's glory and man's well-being; peace, therefore, is God's cause. Ecclesiastical systems of error have been the bane of the church, and, riveted by state authority, have been one of the heaviest drags on the chariot wheels of the gospel; church purity, therefore, is the cause of God. Now, in the gospel of the Saviour are two principles, which, if imbibed and carried out, would overthrow every evil, and bring about the consummation of every good—the love of God, and the love of man; one as a burning flame ascending to Deity, and the other as a benignant sunbeam shining upon the world. All real good in the world is identified with God's cause.

IV. The cause of God is greatly impeded and opposed. Opposed by all the moral evil in the world; by all the power of Satan. Impeded by the apathy of its professed friends; impeded by human systems, creeds, and earthly influences; by the want of devotedness, prayer, and faith of Christians.

V. Prayer to God on behalf of his cause is the church's duty. What examples we have in the history of the church, where the ardent piety of its people was thus displayed! How Moses interceded; how David supplicated, &c.; how Jeremiah prayed and wept; how Paul agonized; how devotionally fervent were the early Christians, the Reformers, the Puritans; Knox, and others; and how eminently godly persons do so now! Thus to pray is pleasing to God—really profitable to ourselves. Such prayer has many promises on which to rest; such earnest prayerfulness has generally preceded and accompanied the reviva of religion.

VI. God can most effectually answer the prayers of his people. Now, he car do this by the signal acts of his providence, or by the especial influences of his grace, or by both harmonizing with each other. Hence observe how he rescued his people from Egypt; how he delivered the Jews from the wicked plots of Haman; how he turned back their captivity by Cyrus; how he has overthrown empires, raised up instruments, and restricted human wrath and passion; how he has made the wrath of man to praise him, &c.; and how he has opened doors of usefulness; given men the powers to adopt varied kinds of instrumentality; how he has raised up remarkable agents—Luther, Wickliffe, Knox, Wesley, Whitfield, &c. But we anticipate the full triumphs of his cause by the universal diffusion of his truth; by the erection of the cross, "And I, if I be lifted up," &c. Providence subserving the means of grace; and this shall be "until the kingdoms of this world," &c. "Till the knowledge of the Lord," &c. "Till all flesh shall see his salvation."

APPLICATION.

1. *Who are with Christ in this cause?* How are you feeling and acting? What doing for its extension? &c. Oh! labor and pray.

2. *Who are indifferent?* More concerned about their own temporal affairs.

3. *Who are opposed to it?* That is a fearful position. We urge you to abandon it. Seek the mercy of the Lord, that you perish not, &c. And now shall not this be our prayer, "Arise, O Lord!" &c.

ON A REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

"Wilt thou not revive us?"—Psalm lxxxv. 6.

To revive signifies to restore; to increase; and a revival of religion supposes its previous existence. The necessity and importance of religion we do not stay to establish. It is presumed that this is felt to be of the very highest moment; of both individual and general interest; essential to man's best interests both in time and eternity. Observe what our text supposes.

I. The comparative low state of religion. We use the term comparative, because that which is only a low state of

religion with one, may be ardor contrasted with that of another. Look at this subject in relation to,

1. *Individuals.* What a limited state of knowledge, faith, peace, hope, joy, &c.; what little devotedness; what formality, earthliness; what selfish manifestations; what feebleness of action for Christ and his cause; how little of the mind of Christ, and the power of high-toned piety.

2. *As to churches.* Here, also, great diversity of state; but take the more prosperous. How few really enlisted in active support of the great movements of the age. How few of the most flourishing churches inspired by glowing zeal; living in all things to God, for souls and eternity.

3. *As to the universal church of Christ.* In its catholic aspect. How feeble its instrumentality—how limited its resources—how contracted its sphere—how few its leading master minds and its members, as contrasted with the subjects of the kingdom of Satan—how little effected—how very much to be done. What solicitude, therefore, should it excite among Christians of all sections of the church.

II. The importance of a revival of religion.

1. *To each individual Christian.* It will be their dignity, elevation, riches, and true felicity. This is their fertility and meetness for eternal glory.

2. *To the great cause of the Redeemer.* Its beauty, vigor, grandeur, extension, and consummation, all depend on the revival of religion.

3. *To the world at large.* How are its darkness, guilt, misery, and wo to be removed without a revival of religion? The spiritual salvation of the world hangs upon it.

III. The means to be adopted for securing a revival of religion.

1. *An increase of personal piety among the disciples of Christ.* This applies to every Christian, especially in humility, faith, and benevolence.

2. *A better organization of the friends of the Redeemer.* The army is large, but the real active force exceedingly few. In churches comprising hundreds, perhaps not more than one in ten is really engaged in active effort for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. Some system of division of labor, &c., must be adopted to remedy this great evil.

3. *The removal of certain great impediments.* The disunion of real Christians; the overthrow of sectarianism, &c.; temporal poverty, and excessive physical toil. We must expect and labor for this. Civil freedom and happiness are favorable to true piety, and its revival throughout the world. It is to be regretted that persons in our own country have so little time to spare for mental and moral improvement. Tyranny and oppression will all be swept away as the truth of the gospel wins its widening course. Ecclesiastical secularities are also great impediments.

4. *The united prayer and self-denial of the church.* Prayers more direct and fervent—more pleading—more agonizing.—Prayer meetings for this end more common, and better frequented. Christians more self-denying. A willingness to give up our own feelings, &c., for the honor of Christ, and the extension of his kingdom.

IV. The probable success of these means. "Wilt thou not?" &c. That God is willing to answer this appeal is evident; for,

1. *He desires it.* It is asking for what is agreeable to him. His bowels yearn over this miserable world; his affections are upon it; he wills the salvation of each and of all.

2. *God has engaged for its accomplishment.* How many the predictions; how great, and radiant, and glowing the promises! and not one shall fail. The celestial heavens are bestudded with them. A galaxy; a milky way.

3. *God has revived his cause in answer to prayer.* His word records instances of such a kind. Two instances must suffice: Neh. viii. 16; Acts iv. 31. In Scotland, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; in England, Ireland, and Wales, in the eighteenth century. Then what ground of hope there is; what reason to unite and plead, "Wilt thou not?" &c.

Application.

1. *Who feels the propriety and force of the text?*

2. *Will you pray, and labor, and toil?* Assist to remove the impediments, and to keep the machinery in motion.

3. *It will be effected by us, or without us.*

4. *See what persons do for sin and false religions.* Pleasure-takers; infidels; pagans.

JEHOVAH'S GRACIOUS DECLARATION CONCERNING THE WICKED.

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked."—EZEKIEL xxxiii. 11.

I KNOW not of a more solemn yet interesting passage in the holy scriptures, than the text we have just read in your hearing. Whether we consider the speaker, or the solemn declaration given, it demands our most serious and prayerful consideration. The speaker is Jehovah, the eternal and ever-blessed God, the fountain of purity, and goodness, and truth. The declaration relates to the death of the sinner. Not the death of the body, but of the soul, that which includes the righteous infliction of wrath in the world to come. The death of deaths; the death that never dies. The declaration affirms that this is not the pleasure of God. He has not appointed, or decreed, or necessitated it. He does not desire it. He confirms this by a solemn asseveration or oath, "As I live." Notice,

I. TO WHOM THE TEXT REFERS.

II. THE EVIDENCES BY WHICH IT IS CONFIRMED.

III. THE IMPRESSIONS IT SHOULD PRODUCE UPON OUR MINDS.

I. TO WHOM DOES THE TEXT REFER? "The wicked." The transgressor. We readily believe that God wills not the death of the righteous. He cannot do this. But the text refers to the very opposite of these. Those who are far from God. Haters of God. Disobedient, &c. Now the term includes all who are unrenewed in their hearts. Hence, in the sight of God, all who are in their natural state are such. But the text will apply,

1. *To the flagrantly wicked.* Notorious sinners. Men who have exceeded those around them in crime. Daring, desperate, prominently vile. Bearing the mark of the beast in their foreheads. Who glory in their shame. Yes, our text applies to the very vilest of these.

2. *To the aged wicked.* God does not will the death of the hoary-headed rebel. He whose childhood was folly — whose youth was riotous—whose maturer years were criminal, and whose old age is evil and perverse, yet in the eternal death of him, God does not delight.

3. *The influentially wicked.* He does not delight in the death even of the ringleaders of evil; yet this is a fearful state to be in. Alluring others to dreary regions of wo. To be champions for vice; to spread the deadliest poison around; to mature others for endless torments; yet these are included in the gracious declaration in the text. Of these, then, none are excluded, no, not one of the countless myriads of the human race.

II. THE EVIDENCES BY WHICH IT IS CONFIRMED. How does it appear that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked?

1. *In not leaving the sinner to the results of his crimes.* God had only to be passive and leave the sinner to his own ways. Guilt made man anxious, wretched, and miserable. Like poison, it would have worked death—as fire, it would have consumed the spirit. Had God left man the prey of his own freely chosen evil, he must have been eternally lost. God's interference was for the sinner's recovery, it was essential to his rescue, and consequently establishes the truth of the text, that God has "no pleasure in the death," &c.

2. *The marvellous provision for man's restoration is another evidence.* God made provision for the salvation of man, that provision was the sacrifice of his own Son. He laid our iniquity upon him. He transferred the sufferings of the guilty to the holy and just One, who suffered for us, that he might bring us to God. This provision is truly marvellous, it surpasses understanding. It is too high, too vast, too sublime, too profound, for human comprehension. The whole economy of redemption exhibited in every unfolding of it the great truth of the text. Wherefore the abasing advent of the Son of God? Wherefore the sorrowful and afflictive life, the cruel and shameful sufferings, the intense agonies, the inexplicable passion, the bloody and ignominious death of the holiest person in the universe, if God delighted in the death of the sinner? The song of Bethlehem—the doctrines of Jesus—the sufferings of our substitute—all, all testify that God "has no pleasure," &c.

3. *The gracious principles on which salvation is tendered is a further evidence of the truth of the text.* To show the divine solicitude for man's welfare, the blessings of salvation are brought down to his mora. exigency and condition. Every impedi ment is removed. Every blessing prepar

ed, and God only requires the acceptance of his mercy, on his own gracious terms of appointment. No oppressive toil—no hard exertions—no painful penances—no preparatory self-preparation. The object of his hope is lifted up, and he has just to look, and as Moses, &c. The bread of life is presented, and he has but to receive it. The fountain of healing is opened at his feet, and he has but to step in. The proclamation of liberty is made, and the door of emancipation is opened, and he has but to go forth and enjoy the liberty and happiness of the children of God. Here then we see in the adaptedness of the gospel provision, that "God has no pleasure," &c.

4. *The long-suffering of God, and his forbearance to the impenitent, further ratify the truth of the text.* Every sinner deserves to die. God could justly punish with death on the first rejection of his gospel. God has power to do it. The sinner is always in his power. But how does the Lord act towards the wicked? He restrains his wrath—he bounds his vengeance—he extends the reprieve, he does vastly more than this, he keeps in activity a variety of means for his rescue and salvation. He sends days and years of these—he sends sabbaths and ordinances—he sends ministers and friends—he sends promises and threatenings—he sends comforts and afflictions, and all for what? That the wicked may not die, to exhibit his unbounded mercy, and to prove that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. We shall only add,

Finally, the solemn asseveration or oath in the text. An oath is a solemn, deliberate affirmation, made as before God, and calling his cognizance to what is attested. Jehovah cannot testify before a greater, for he is the only God, and beside him there is none else; but to vindicate his tender mercy and compassion for the welfare of the wicked, he stands forth, and before angels, men, and devils, he proclaims by his own eternal immutability, "As I live," (not only in myself, by my eternal self-existence, but as the fountain of life and being to the universe itself,) "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Let us briefly notice, then,

III. The impressions it should produce upon our minds.

1. *We should be impressed with our own personal responsibility.* Many would cavil with circumstances, and reason about necessity, and thus remove the blame from themselves, and affirm his desire for our destruction. Every man must give an account, and God will reward every man, &c.

2. *We should be affected by God's gracious conduct towards us.* What love and mercy is here exhibited! It ought to melt the hardest heart. It ought to constrain the most desperate rebel, &c.

3. *We should co-operate with God so as to secure the great salvation.* Nothing is requisite but to act with God. To will as God wills; agreement here will secure present reconciliation and eternal happiness.

4. *We should do all in our power to prevent the wicked from dying.* Every minister. Every Christian, feel, pray, labor, &c., or we are not like God.

ADAM AND EVE.

"So God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."—Genesis i. 27.

The history of our first parents cannot but be interesting in whatever light it is considered. Of their nature we are partakers. In the results of their conduct we are involved, and therefore from their example and history, valuable instruction must be derived. With the leading events in their lives scripture is replete, and therefore to its divine and authentic records let us appeal. We may contemplate them,

I. In their primeval purity and blessedness. The offspring of God; made by him, and for him; but especially formed under peculiarly interesting circumstances. The last and fairest of the divine works—the result of the divine council—and formed in the divine likeness—created with a spiritual nature, immediately proceeding from God, chapter ii. 7. Intellectual, holy, happy—in their understanding, reflecting the divine knowledge—in their judgment, the divine truth—in their affections, the divine goodness—in their conscience, the divine purity—in their will, the divine dominion. All the faculties and passions nicely balanced. All their powers in a state of transparent beauty and harmony. God enthroned in their affections, adored in their spirits, and obeyed in their lives. In their earthly condition, having the supremacy over all

terrestrial creatures; invested with entire, indisputable dominion; the earth their domain; Eden their royal abode; angels their friends and companions, and all creatures their willing and obedient servants; above all, God their joy and supreme good. In this state they had ability to abide. Subject to Deity by a law the most easy, beneficent, and practicable; but alas! how soon is this picture of moral beauty and felicity reversed. Behold them,

II. In a state of temptation and peril. Tempted by the devil. Tempted to disbelieve God in reference to the forbidden fruit—tempted to disobey his explicit commands—tempted to exalt themselves to an equality with God. These temptations were addressed to the weaker vessel, when alone, and alas! they were successful and prevailed. She beheld, and hearkened, and desired, and ate. Adam also from her received the fruit of sin, and fell into the same condemnation. With this act fled innocence, peace, and purity. Shame was the immediate result, and fear and dread followed in its train; thus sin and wo were introduced into our world. Observe them,

III. Under arrest and examination. By the darkness of their minds, they had supposed it possible to flee from God. How foolish, how futile! His voice arrested them. Their fear and shame are confessed, chapter iii. 10. The heart-searching interrogation is presented. "Hast thou eaten," &c. Self-justification — man throws the blame on the woman, and the Being who had given her to him. "The woman whom thou gavest me," &c. And then reluctantly the admission, "I did eat." The woman throws the blame on the serpent. Ah, sin was found so degrading and miserable, that its perpetrators were most anxious to disown it. And now notice them,

IV. Receiving the righteous sentence of God. On the woman was pronounced sorrow in conception and child-bearing, and subjection to her husband, verse 16. To the man toil, perpetuated through the course of his existence. "In the sweat," &c., ver. 19. And on both, the dissolution of the body. "Dust thou art," &c. And now the seeds of death began their operation, influence, &c. Every step was one towards the house appointed for all living; but in addition to this sentence, sin had effaced the moral beauty and excellency of their spiritual nature. The gold, alas, how dim! the fine gold how changed! The crown of dignity had now fallen from their head, and the sceptre of royalty from their grasp. The spirit was bereft of its virgin purity, and the moral glory had departed; instead of peace was anxiety; instead of joy, remorse; instead of tranquillity, distraction; instead of health, disease; instead of the divine smile and approbation, the holy displeasure of God. Notice,

V. Their expulsion from the abode of holiness and bliss. As traitors their inheritance was forfeited, as rebels they were excluded those peaceful scenes of purity and joy. God himself exercised the sentence. "So he drove out the man," &c., and a flaming sword prevented their access to the tree of life. Now, alas! sinners, polluted and wretched, and expelled the paradise which had been prepared as a residence of dignity and enjoyment. But observe them,

VI. As the subjects of God's merciful interposition. In the midst of wrath, mercy was remembered. Compassion triumphed over judgment; and when the cloud of punishment seemed so black and terrible as to exclude all hope, a ray of celestial light streaked the agitated horizon, and a promise of redemption and deliverance given in those joyous words, that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head. Doubtless religious instruction and direction were given. The mode of access to God revealed; the way of their gracious acceptance clearly made known; and the terms of their final salvation fully detailed. Let us,

1. Mourn over the evil of sin.
2. Rejoice in the remedy provided. And,
3. Personally seek the salvation the gospel proclaims.

FAITH AND SACRIFICE OF ABEL.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh"—Hebrews xi. 4.

How awfully prolific and rapid in its dire progress is sin! The first man born into our world was a murderer; not only a murderer, but a fratricide—the murderer of his brother. How greatly mistaken was the mother of all living when, at the birth

of Cain, she exclaimed, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," imagining that he was the promised seed who should bruise the serpent's head. Her second son was a martyr, and one destined to lead the van among those who suffered death for the testimony of Jesus. Our subject however this morning refers to his faith, and the sacrifice he presented to God. To this then we would call your serious and prayerful attention.

I. ABEL OFFERED SACRIFICE UNTO GOD. The immediate and precise origin of sacrifices is not revealed. It is exceedingly probable that when God revealed the promise of a Saviour to our first parents, he gave them direct instructions on the subject of sacrifices, and we have no doubt the skins with which he clothed them were the skins of animals which had been thus presented. Animal food was not then allowed. To slay animals expressly for their skins is improbable, but to suppose the beasts slain for sacrifice, and the skins thus appropriated, seems reasonable, and leads us at once to the very probable institution of sacrifices. Doubtless God revealed the nature of the sacrifices, and the symbolical end they were to answer. Abel's sacrifice was the firstling of his flock. A lamb, the best and most choice his flock could yield. This was afterwards incorporated in the Jewish ritual as the great annual offering. The victim which Abel presented was slain. Doubtless a rude altar of stones was erected, and on this the lamb was presented to God.

II. ABEL'S SACRIFICE WAS MORE EXCELLENT THAN CAIN'S.

(1.) Now we presume it was the offering prescribed by God. God will not own or bless will-worship. In religion God leaves no room for fancy or human invention.

(2.) Abel's offering was better, as being more suited to a sinner. Homage, reverence, gratitude, &c., become holy beings, something more is necessary from the guilty. A sinner requires a mediator, a way of access to God. Cain's sacrifice only savored of natural religion. God's claims as a Creator and Benefactor must not be forgotten; but we must never forget, as guilty beings, that we need pardon, and as polluted, a laver of purification. Praise and veneration will not do instead of repentance, confession, and faith.

III. ABEL OFFERED HIS SACRIFICE IN FAITH. And his faith,

1. *Would regard his own unworthiness and guilt.* "The whole have no need of a physician," &c. The act of killing the lamb, would lead him to reflect on the just desert of sin. By sin came death. "Here I see the claims of God's offended justice and broken law, thus my life might have been poured out."

2. *His faith regarded the great sacrifice of which his lamb was but an emblem and a type.* The ancient sacrifices were designed to keep up and prefigure the great propitiation for sin. The ancient saints rested not on the victims slain, but on the Lamb of God, who should be offered in the latter days for the sin of the world.

3. *His faith would regard his own interest and dependence on that sacrifice.* He offered the sacrifice for himself, he felt personally concerned. Here he rested his hope, and believed God would accept him through the promised Messiah. He believed what God had testified, and on that great Victim he rested all his expectation of God's favor, and eternal life.

IV. GOD TESTIFIED HIS APPROBATION OF ABEL'S SACRIFICE. "He obtained witness," &c., "God testifying," &c., see Gen. iv. 4.

1. *How did God witness?* He could have done so by an audible voice, but doubtless by fire consuming the victim. Some commentators render "he had respect,"—"kindled with fire." This was the way in which God accepted the sacrifices under the law, see Lev. ix. 24.

2. *What did God witness?* "That he was righteous." Offered what pleased God; obeyed God's sacrificial law; but it doubtless means that he was justified, forgiven; that God expressed his favor, and accepted him through the great sacrifice; that his heart was penitent, humbled, believing.

V. ABEL BY HIS FAITH AND SACRIFICE STILL GIVES INSTRUCTION TO MANKIND. "By it he being dead," &c. Now in what does Abel instruct us? He saith,

1. *That sinful man may have access to God.* Can man approach a holy Being? Will he not perish? No, God is accessible even to the guilty, the sinner may bow down and not perish, "for his mercy endureth forever." He saith,

2. *That the way of sacrifice is the only way which God approves.* "Without shedding of blood," &c. All our blessings are

through Christ's death. No pardon or holiness without it. He saith,

3. *That faith is essential to acceptance.* Unbelief insults God—rejects his mercy. Throws discredit on his word. Faith trusts all and every thing, where God has laid the only foundation. As the poet has sung,

> "Believe, and all your sin's forgiven;
> Believe, and you are heirs of heaven."

4. *That true religion may expose to severe suffering.* It may cost us our wealth, liberty, reputation, yea, life itself. "If a man will lose his life," &c. It cost Abel his. He was slain by his brother.

Finally, it teaches us, that God's favor will amply repay for all it may cost. Abel paid a great price, but was it not worth it? You do not doubt it. Myriads have paid the same, and not one has ever regretted it. Not one that would not cheerfully pay the same cost again. Go through the whole army of martyrs, behold them in their white robes, see their glittering crowns, their waving palms. Ask you, who are they? These are they "who came out of great tribulation," &c. If they had a thousand lives, they would sacrifice them all for Christ—all for salvation—all for eternal life. Believers, cleave to Christ. Sinners, come to him and live.

CAIN

"And bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord."—GENESIS iv. 1.

SUCH is the brief account of the entrance into our world of the first of woman born. The first promise had inspired our progenitors with the hope that Cain was the woman's seed who should bruise the serpent's head. Little did they think that that child was to be the cruel persecutor and murderer of his brother, and that age upon age must pass away before the appearance of the incarnate Redeemer of the world. Let us just glance at the leading particulars in the life and character of Cain. Observe,

I. HIS PECULIAR CONDITION AS THE FIRST-BORN CHILD. What anxieties he would occasion; what attention elicit; what hopes and desires excite; the first infant, with all the accompanying weakness, &c., of that state. How dignified in his parentage, notwithstanding their fall, &c.; how copiously towards him would maternal kindness flow; how every action would be observed; how his growth and advancement towards maturity watched, &c. Notice,

II. HIS RURAL OCCUPATION. "A tiller of the ground." Though the eldest of Adam's progeny, yet he was not nursed in the lap of luxury and indolence. Industry is an honor to any man, however exalted. His labor was of a useful kind, adapted to increase his physical health and enjoyment. He had before him the beauties of nature—around him the wonders of creation—and above him the glorious heavens, in the height of which sat enthroned the Maker and Lord of the universe. His occupation was favorable to meditation, to seriousness, and communion with God. It was adapted also to promote gratitude to God, and dependence upon the communications of his rich and essential blessings on the culture of the accursed ground. The earth he tilled proclaimed the injury it had sustained through sin, and also would admonish him as to his final dusty bed. Consider him,

III. AS AN UNACCEPTABLE WORSHIPPER. It seems highly probable that God had revealed to our first parents the nature and character of that service he would require from them; and, doubtless, the offering of sacrifices was an essential part thereof. Thus the worshipper would be led to perceive the evil and desert of sin, and to look forward to the great sacrifice which should in the end of the ages take away the sin of the world. But Cain's offering "was of the fruit of the ground," in which God was recognised only as the Lord of nature; a mere acknowledgment of his being and government, such as holy creatures might with propriety have presented. But neither Cain's spirit nor worship had the least reference to his sinfulness, or the necessity of divine mercy. In this it is contrasted with that of Abel, verse 4. As such, it was rejected of the Almighty. Observe him,

IV. AS A VICTIM OF FRATERNAL ENVY AND MALEVOLENCE. He discovered that his offering was rejected, while God honored Abel by a gracious acceptance of the sacrifice he had presented; and now envy—that foul Satanic passion—took possession of his soul. It is said, "He was very wroth, and his countenance fell." His soul disdained his God, and hated his brother; he indignantly abhorred him for his excellence, and the worst of all feelings now rankled in his bosom. Alas! he was

now the slave of the destroyer, that wicked one, who was a murderer from the beginning. A great proportion of the crime and misery of our world is to be traced to the sin which had now full possession of the soul of Cain. We are called to view him,

V. As a guilty fratricide. God had expostulated with him on his wrath, and sullenness, and envy; he had cleared himself of partiality, and had assured him that if he did well he should be accepted; he had thrown the responsibility entirely upon him, see verse 7; but it was all in vain; the demon of hate still kept possession, until at length "he rose up and slew his brother." Thus did the influence of Satan and man's depravity prevail; thus did excellency and real piety suffer; and thus did the accursed earth drink in the precious blood of one of the saints of the Most High. Abel had lived in the divine service and favor; was hated and persecuted for his superior and godly spirit; died a martyr; and was the first of the human race to realize the blessedness and glory of the eternal world. Observe,

VI. Cain a guilty culprit in the presence of the supreme Judge. How overwhelming the solemn interrogation of Jehovah, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" the cool and wicked falsehood he uttered, "I know not;" the heartless, evading question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" then the solemn declaration of God, "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth," &c.; the pronouncing of the curse, "And now art thou cursed from the ground," &c., verses 11, 12. His misery now filled him with horror, and overwhelmed, he exclaimed, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Divine mercy was richly mingled in God's dealings with him. He was allowed to live; his life was pronounced sacred, verse 15; his punishment was evidently limited to this life; his after-life is not stated; but we fear he remained a child of the wicked one.

REMARKS.

1. Unbelief is one of the reigning principles of the carnal heart, and is full of evil fruit.

2. How fearful a sin is envy; how to be guarded against.

3. How essential is the fear of God.

4. How all-important an interest in Christ Jesus.

GOD'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING ENOCH.

"By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."—Hebrews xi. 5.

In every age and dispensation, God has had his illustrious servants exhibiting to all around the power of religion, and the beauties of holiness. In the first age of the world, there was the pious Abel, the first of the noble army of martyrs; in the period which intervened between that time and the flood, there was the holy Enoch, of whom our text speaks; at the time of the deluge, there was the righteous Noah. So we see that each period, however dark and wicked, had its pious luminaries, its sacred stars, which lit up the moral hemisphere, and showed men the true pathway to a blissful immortality. We now direct your attention to Enoch. Observe,

I. His personal holiness.
II. His internal assurance.
III. His glorious reward.

I. His personal holiness. This is thus expressed by the Holy Spirit: "And Enoch walked with God." In the Greek translation of the Old Testament scriptures, it is rendered the same as in our text, "He pleased God." Three things have ever been requisite in pleasing God:—

1. *Faith.* "By faith Enoch," &c. "Without faith it is impossible," &c. Faith is the firm persuasion of the truth of a testimony or record. To reject or disbelieve such a testimony, is to make the person testifying a liar, the greatest possible insult you can offer. This is what unbelief does to God. He that believes not the record God has given, &c., makes God a liar. How horrible the idea! What God testified to Enoch we know not, or how; whether by vision, an audible voice, or by immediate inspiration. Whatever was the method of God's communicating his testimony, Enoch believed God; he believed all the Lord testified; and this was the basis of all his religion, the root of that pious tree which bare such holy fruit, and was finally transplanted to the blissful regions of the heavenly paradise. In pleasing God there must be,

2. *Affectionate communion.* God must be supremely loved—the object of our

soul's delight; he must have the palace of the heart—the throne of the affections. The soul was originally created for this; capable of it; and this must be the centre around which the mind must revolve, and the end to which all its delights must tend. Thus God will be in the thoughts, in the imaginations, in the mental exercises of the mind. He will be with us, and we shall be with him, in secret, in public, by the wayside, by day, and by night. We shall have continual fellowship and spiritual intercourse with him. In pleasing God there must be,

3. *Constant and progressive obedience.* "Be followers of God as dear children." We are to imitate Deity. Thus Christ, the good shepherd, says, "My sheep hear my voice, and follow me." God's voice must not only be listened to, delighted in, but also obeyed; and there must be constancy in this; it must be the wont and custom, the habit and practice. There must also be advancement; going onward. The child can walk but feebly, or a little at a time; but it gains strength, and then can do so easily and more extensively.

II. His happy assurance. "He had this testimony," &c. Now, we may be assured of having the approbation of another in several ways. Take the case of a child and its father, or the subject and sovereign.

(1.) Now, if either give certain commands in which they exhibit great interest, and to which they attach great importance, then by obeying those commands, and carrying out those designs, we rationally conclude that we possess their approbation.

(2.) This will be still more forcibly deduced, if we feel that we have the same spirit, enter heartily upon the same pursuits. Thus, supposing the emperor of China is sincere in his denunciations against opium, every Englishman must please him who labors to prevail with our countrymen to abandon that traffic. Now this may be still more effectually ratified,

(3.) By a written, or a verbal attestation. Let a child show the father's letter wherein his approval is attested, or state the sentiments he has uttered; let the subject refer to his king's eulogy, and then the matter is placed beyond all doubt. The Christian has this threefold testimony:—

i. He compares his life by the divine word, and he reads his conformity to that. He sees some faint resemblance in that infallible mirror.

ii. He searches his own spirit, and he feels that it agrees with the Spirit of God; with God's desires and delights; and in this, that it is the opposite of what it was.

iii. God's Spirit imparts the approving light of his countenance and breathings of peace, just as when Christ visited his disciples, and breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye," &c. The apostle says on this subject, "Because ye are sons," &c. Gal. iv. 6; Rom. viii. 14, 16. "For as many as are led," &c. This testimony is exceedingly valuable,

(1.) As it regards our safety.

(2.) As it regards our comfort; for both of these entirely depend on having this testimony, &c. Observe,

III. His glorious reward. "Was translated," &c. This is sometimes spoken of in reference to character and state. "Translated from the kingdom of darkness," &c.; but here it refers to the removal of Enoch from this world to the heavenly glory. "He was not," &c. He did not remain on earth; he was not found in his usual sphere; it is probable his friends were surprised when they missed him, and knew not whence he was removed. God, however, declared that he had taken him, or in the words of our text, "translated him." He was thus exempted from the stroke of death; he was delivered from the corruption of mortality; he entered not the house appointed for all living; his remains did not see corruption; but it is clear that he underwent some important change to fit him for the joys of immortality. 1 Cor. xv. 50.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the doctrine of a future state of existence.* And in respect both of body and soul. This is but the dawn of our being—the infancy of our existence; the body shall live again. There are already three glorified bodies in heaven—Enoch's, Elijah's, and that of our blessed Redeemer. These are the first-fruits of a glorious harvest.

2. *The sure path to a blessed immortality.* Walking with God, and thus having the testimony, &c. Believers, cherish this. Sinners, be anxious for this, &c. Let all think how important it will be in the day of death and of judgment.

3. *The great, essential principle of saving religion is faith.*

THE FEAR AND FAITH OF NOAH.

"By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."—HEBREWS xi. 17.

WE now proceed to contemplate the third distinguished worthy presented to our notice in this illustrious chapter of the believing heroes of Old Testament history. The same striking encomium is passed upon his devoted spirit and conduct as on that of Enoch; see what is said of Noah, in 6th chapter of Genesis, 9th verse, &c. Our text, however, refers to the great leading events in his life; his deliverance from the flood, which God brought upon the old world. This is very concisely, yet clearly presented to us in the words of the apostle, "By faith, Noah being warned," &c. In reference to Noah, notice,

I. THE WARNING HE RECEIVED. We read the warning, Gen. vi. 13, 14. The cause of this awful threatening was the universal spread of deep-toned iniquity and corruption, Gen. vi. 1–5, 12. The nature of the threatening was the universal destruction of all flesh. This God threatened he would accomplish by a flood of waters, verse 17. This warning related to *unseen things*. There was nothing to indicate this in all the range of nature around him. The sky, and earth, and sea wore their usual aspect. The man of observation might look round, and yet nothing confirmed the intimation; the man of science might appeal to the laws of nature, &c. The worldlings of that day would not spare one hour to examine the question, nor the men of pleasure nave one scene of banqueting less; the great mass of the people would ridicule and laugh at the folly of the eccentric, fanatical Noah; yet, despite of all this, the warning was received in the spirit of pious reverence by that godly man. Notice,

II. NOAH'S CONDUCT IN REFERENCE TO THIS WARNING.

1. *He believed God.* He regarded the threatening as coming from the faithful and true Jehovah. Faith in God's testimony was the spring of Noah's conduct. This is he basis on which the structure of *r* is after ife was built.

2. *His faith produced fear.* He feared the evil threatened—the wrath denounced. God is greatly to be feared; his wrath is terrible. This is the characteristic of the Lord's people, that they have his fear before their eyes. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." They are in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

3. *His fear was connected with active obedience.* He obeyed God. God told him how he might escape by the construction of an ark, Gen. vi. 14. Here the duty was formidable, expensive, connected with great toil, and which would expose him to general contempt; but his faith was operative. "He prepared the ark," &c.; as prescribed by God; the identical vessel in all things, as God had ordered. His obedience was *full*, *minute*, and *explicit*, see verse 22. "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." This is genuine, acceptable, saving religion. Notice,

III. THE REWARD WHICH FOLLOWED THE PIOUS COURSE NOAH ADOPTED. We see the importance of *believing God's word*, and thus fearing his wrath, and gratefully accepting the method of escape he has provided. Two things specified:—

(1.) He condemned the world; his preaching, and practice, and building the ark, all condemned the world; left it excuseless; justified God's dispensation.

(2.) He became heir of righteousness; that is, he became before God and men a righteous character, and therefore entitled, through the mercy of God, to the reward which had been promised. But the reward itself,

1. *Consisted in his own preservation.* He escaped the vengeance of God; his life was spared, the greatest earthly blessing he could enjoy; and this was but a shadow of the great and eternal salvation which as a righteous man he would enjoy forever.

2. *His family were also interested in the deliverance.* God often blesses individuals for the sake of others. There is a real blessing in being piously connected; but that will not save, if they personally reject the piety of their relatives; see the case of Lot and his daughters, &c. The advantages and privileges are greater; but if abused, their condition is the more signally awful. Noah's sons, and their wives, evidently obeyed Noah, regarded his commands, went with him readily into the ark,

&c., and thus were delivered with him. Oh! how joyous to be saved, and those related to each other, all saved together.

APPLICATION.

1. *God has revealed the certainty of a future judgment.* He has recorded the method, and the sublime grandeur of the great day; he has reiterated this solemn warning; of this we see no indication. The scoffer asks, Where is the promise? &c. Men generally neglect and despise it; but the day will come. The flood was delayed 120 years, yet it came at length; so will the final day of God.

2. *God demands your belief of this great and solemn warning.* He calls you to fear, &c.

3. *He has revealed a way of safety.* His Son is the ark; the door of this ark is open; he urges you to enter; on this your safety depends; no other way. Are you believing—fearing—obeying?

4. *Are you laboring for the security of your children? &c.* They are all equally welcome with you; but each must personally enter.

ABRAHAM'S BELIEVING PILGRIMAGE.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith, he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."—HEBREWS xi. 8–10.

AFTER God had frustrated the Babel builders, and confused their speech, sacred history refers us to the origin of distinct nations, and the fact of God choosing Abraham to be the father of the Jewish people, and one whom God engaged to bless and make a blessing. To this eventful period the text refers; see Gen. xii. 1, &c. Thus Abraham acted through the influence of faith. He believed God; he forsook all for God; he went where God directed; he considered himself but as a stranger; and, finally, he looked for a more fixed and abiding habitation.

I. ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD. For this he holds a most eminent and exalted station in the sacred pages of truth; so much so, that he has the honored appellation of "father of the faithful." His confidence in God was so full, and entire, and unshaken, that he was styled the friend of God. Now, as faith is the foundation of every holy work, in proportion as this is strong and vigorous, will every virtue thrive, and flourish, and bear fruit. It is like gold, the most precious of all metals; but we are enriched according to the abundance we possess of it. Weak faith is valuable; but it is strong faith gives glory to God. Weak faith will walk safely on a calm lake; but strong faith will not sink in the tempest or the storm. How desirable it is to believe God! all God says, and at all times. Faith has an eagle's wing, and an eagle's eye; it can rise to the greatest possible elevation, and it has a lion's courage amidst confusion and persecution; even when the sea roars, and the earth shakes, it sits with firm security, and sings "defiance to the gates of hell!"

II. ABRAHAM FORSOOK ALL FOR GOD His own country; his father's house. In this,

1. *He gave up what he possessed for that which was promised.* He had an interest in his father's house, and his own country. These were in hand, in possession; and, doubtless, were far from being despicable. He left, however, his own land, and his father's house, for that which was named in the promise.

2. *He gave up the present for the future.* Present subsistence, and present patrimony, for some good to be hereafter bestowed. Now, in these we see the nature of the demands religion makes. Abandonment of our carnal possessions and pleasures for those which God promises; to give up the society of the world for the church; to resign present profits for future advantages; to lose sight of earth and time for heaven and eternity. Abraham became as it were isolated from the world to be united to God; a true picture of spiritual religion. We cannot enjoy the world and God; nor love both; nor serve both. We may use the world; but it cannot be pre-eminent, and God be glorified.

III. HE WENT WHERE GOD DIRECTED. True religion has,

1. *An ear to listen to God.* "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." God spake

to Abraham, and he reverently heard the will of God propounded to him.

2. *Feet of cheerful obedience.* Having heard and understood, he "obeyed." Acted as God directed; walked as he chalked out the way. God said, This is the way, and Abraham walked in it.

3. *Unsuspecting surrender of all into the Lord's hands.* "Not knowing," &c. God knew, and this was his comfort, &c. It is not necessary for a passenger to understand navigation to reach the port, &c., in safety; or for a child to know the way, when its father holds its hand; or the patient, anatomy or medicine, when the skilful physician is present.

IV. ABRAHAM CONSIDERED HIMSELF A STRANGER. As such he acted and lived. He conducted himself as a dying man in a dying world; he knew this was not his rest, or home, or portion; and this is precisely the spirit we should feel and cherish. A little reflection might convince every one of the propriety of this. This world is merely a land of passage: eight hundred millions are ever crowding its surface; but they are all moving. "One generation passeth away," &c. Some are just leaving it—others just entering—but all are moving. Hence life, as a river, is ever emptying its countless drops into the ocean of eternity.

V. HE LOOKED FOR A MORE FIXED AND ABIDING HABITATION. Here he recognised his own immortality; he associated with future existence a union with kindred spirits; he beheld above not a desert but a city—the city of God—the new Jerusalem—the palace of Jehovah. He saw its foundations were firm; yea, firmer than a rock, the very being, and purposes, and perfections of God sustaining it. Its grandeur was worthy of its artificer. "Builder and maker is God." He looked for it by faith, and daily hope, and constant prayer; he reckoned upon it as his own; he lived in reference to it; and daily felt himself getting nearer and nearer.

APPLICATION.

1. *Have we obeyed God, and given up the sinful pursuits of the present world?*

2. *Are we walking by faith or sight?* Abandoning present temporal gain, for future spiritual and eternal glory.

3. *Urge all to set out.*

4. *Believers to persevere, &c.*

JACOB WRESTLING WITH THE ANGEL

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the break of day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him."—GENESIS xxxii. 24, 25, &c.

THE patriarchs and early saints possessed not the valuable direction of a written revelation. In that early age there were none especially inspired either to teach or prophesy to the people. To make up for this, God often revealed himself to his saints, especially by visions and dreams of the night. Oftentimes too did Jehovah appear and discourse with them, assuming sometimes the form of a man, and at other times the appearance of an angel. Jacob was favored with two of these especial manifestations. At Bethel, where he saw the ladder reaching to heaven, and on the occasion to which the text refers. Notice,

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH JACOB WAS PLACED.

II. HIS MYSTERIOUS CONFLICT.

III. HIS WONDROUS VICTORY.

IV. THE BLESSINGS BY WHICH IT WAS FOLLOWED.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH HE WAS PLACED.

1. *He was returning into his own country.* He left it through fear of his incensed brother. More than twenty years had passed over. His return was under God's direction, ver. 9. "In all thy ways acknowledge," &c. "Commit thy way," &c.

2. *His brother was announced as coming in wrath to meet him.* He had wisely and piously sent a message of kindness to Esau, v. 3, &c.; but his resentment was aroused, and Jacob is informed of his hostility, &c., ver. 6.

3. *He had prudently arranged his temporal concerns.* His peril seemed awfully imminent. What could he do? (ver. 7.)

4. *He had fervently poured out his soul to God.* He followed up all with earnest prayer. He pleaded God's promises, ver. 9 to 12. Having done this, he sent over the brook his flocks, and also his family.

5. *He was now enjoying devotional solitude.* "Alone," so far as mortal beings were concerned. "Alone," to press his suit with God. "Alone," to confess his

sins, and to open all his heart to the Lord. Notice,

II. His mysterious conflict. This conflict was mysterious indeed; we have nothing like it on record. It was not merely mental. His body and soul were engaged; but who was the glorious being, &c. "A man," says the text; but in verse 28, he is said to have "power with God." See Hosea xii. 4, 5. None other than Jehovah Jesus. God in the appearance of humanity. God anticipating his incarnation, &c.

(1.) How unequal the conflict!

(2.) How protracted! lasted for several hours.

(3.) To show the weakness of Jacob, and his own power, he touches him and disjoints the hollow of his thigh; but still Jacob maintains the struggle.

(4.) He solicits permission to retire. "Let me go, for the day breaketh." How easily he could have done so! but he honors Jacob's perseverance, and elicits his strongest faith. God will not oppose physical might to moral power. He allows moral influence to prevail.

(5.) Mark, Jacob resolves not to yield without the blessing. "I will not," &c. What pious valor, decision, energy, perseverance! And now observe,

III. The wondrous victory he achieved. God allows omnipotence to yield to the influence of faithful prayer. In token of the victory,

(1.) He obliterates his former name. No more Jacob, i. e. Supplanter, the sins and frailties of the past blotted out, see chapter xxvii. 34, &c.

(2.) A new name is given, "Israel," a name of honor and holy distinction. "One who has power with Jehovah," one who has prevailed with the divine majesty of heaven and earth. The title was one of great honor, and everlasting renown; a name too which should descend to thousands of thousands, and to generations then unborn. Then notice,

IV. The blessings by which it was followed. Verse 23. "And with men," &c. This victory was the assurance that men should not overcome or destroy him, the less victory would certainly follow the greater.

(1.) The mind of Jacob was filled with sublime yet sweet conceptions of God's glory. He called the place, "Peniel," &c.

(2.) He marvelled at his own preservation. "And my life is preserved."

(3.) The wrath of his brother was turned aside. His heart was in the Lord's hand, and he subdued and softened it. "If a man's ways please the Lord," &c.

(4.) He retained, however, the sense of his weakness. "He halted upon his thigh." Lest he should be exalted above measure. To keep him prostrate before the Lord, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *The marvellous potency of prayer.* How wondrous its achievements! What hath it wrought?

2. *The secret of its power is fervor.* Persevering fervor. What was emblemized by Jacob's wrestling? Not fainting; not ceasing; but pleading, and pressing our suit. Let us long for, and seek the spirit of prayer, and the grace of supplication.

3. *Let the prayerless now see the value of prayer.*

PHARAOH AND JACOB.

A SKETCH FOR THE AGED.

"And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou?"—Genesis xlvii. 8, 9.

Our text introduces us to one of the most striking scenes of Old Testament history. We have before us three distinguished individuals; the monarch of Egypt; the prime minister, raised by extraordinary providences from a captive to that exalted station; and the devout Jacob; the man who, as a holy prince, had power with men and with God, and who was named Israel because he prevailed. Joseph is introducing his venerable and beloved father to Pharaoh, who with affable condescension and kindness, thus addresses the hoary headed saint, "And Pharaoh said unto Jacob," &c. Let us consider the question, the reply, and the lessons it suggests.

I. The Question asked. "How old art thou?" We observe this is,

1. *A very common question.* How often it has been asked in our hearing, of us, and from us to others! We may generally form some idea, but not always correct, some persons look much younger. Read the account of Moses, Deut. xxxiv. 7. Also of Joshua, xiv. 10, &c.; others look aged early—labor,

sorrow, constitutional weakness, afflictions, &c. Some become old early by emaciating sins, &c. The wicked often do not live out half their time.

2. *This question is interesting.* How marvellous is life! The wonder is that we live, not that we die. How mysteriously is life sustained, what pulsations! what inspirations and respirations of the lungs! how many vessels have to be acting so that the machinery may not stand still! as the poet says,

"Our life contains a thousand springs," &c.

besides, the dangers are so numerous, &c.

"Dangers stand thick through all the ground,
To push us to the tomb;
And fierce diseases wait around,
To hurry mortals home."

3. *This question is solemn and momentous.* It is connected with great responsibilities, mercies, privileges, opportunities, gratitude, improvement, and duties demanded; oh! weigh this, and then how momentous life becomes! But, also, because it is connected with eternity; our cradles rock us to the tomb; whatever we do, wherever we be, we are travelling to the grave; yes, and to eternity.

"Lo! on a narrow neck of land,
'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand," &c.

To elderly persons, how affecting this should be to you; the morning and the afternoon, the spring and the summer are gone, and the evening and the autumn are passing away. Observe in reference to this question,

II. THE ANSWER GIVEN.—Mark,

1. *The age specified.* 130 years, a very extended age, yet it was short when contrasted with his predecessors; his father Isaac lived 180, his grandfather 175, his great grandfather 205, and many of the antediluvians approached to 800 and 900 years; yet 130 to us appears very long. In the time of Moses, the great majority did not survive 70, and now a generation is computed at 30 years; these are statistics well worthy of our consideration.

2. *He represents his years as being few.* There is the most marked difference in past time and the future; how short a period is a year in the retrospect! Ask the aged, and they all agree, that a long life is as nothing; one says it is as yesterday, another says it is as a tale, &c., a mere vapor, man's life is but as a shadow, a flitting cloud, &c.

3. *He describes his years as being evil.* That is, years of sorrow and affliction. Jacob's were so in many cases. His own private anxieties—exiled when a youth, servant for twenty years to his uncle, much domestic trouble. There stands the tomb of Rachel; then Joseph is in his opinion slain; his sons, some of them profligate others cruel, most of them ungodly. In his old age exposed to adversity through famine; he was the man who had seen trouble; fears within and fightings without; and this is a fair sample of human life; most of you know it. A wilderness a rough sea—a perilous desert.

4. *He describes his whole life as a pilgrimage.* "The days of the years," &c. I like this form of speech. We should not forget that our years are formed of days, we cannot tell what a day may bring forth "So teach us to number our days," &c. Altogether it is a pilgrimage. Incessant change—mutability itself—a continuous progression. Not at home in the body. "strangers," &c. Thus the saints have always felt. "They confessed," &c. Now let us notice,

III. THE LESSONS WHICH IT SUGGESTS.

1. *Let us form a true estimate of life.* It is short and sorrowful. Let us settle this in our minds, we shall then treat the world as such, and expect such treatment from it.

2. *Let us ascertain if the great ends of life are accomplished by us.* The ends for which we should live.

(1.) For ourselves. To secure our own salvation and spiritual improvement.

(2.) For the good of others, our families, the church, and the world.

(3.) For God. To glorify Him, to show forth our love and gratitude, &c. He formed us for this, &c.

3. *Let me ask the elderly if they are distinguished for the graces and virtues which should distinguish old age.* Should not such excel in knowledge, experience, patience, self-command, spiritual-mindedness, charity, &c., such should be ensamples and counsellors to the young, &c.

4. *Old age without piety is a fearful state.* Think of the sins of sixty or seventy years, of the abused blessings, and neglected privileges; what a mountain of guilt, &c. Travelling from God and heaven toward

perdition, how awful your influence on others, &c.

5. *The aged sinner may be forgiven.* God's patience yet waits, His mercy still lingers. The door is still open, but do not delay or trifle. Be intent, &c.

6. *May all present set out on the heavenly pilgrimage.*

ESAU.

"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright," &c.—HEBREWS xii. 16, 17.

VERY much has been improperly said and inferred respecting Esau. By some he has been represented as the type of the abandoned, and as bearing the broad seal of God's eternal reprobation. Surely such forget, that by representing him as hated of God and predestined to wo, with all feeling minds they must enlist pity for his wretchedness, and sympathy on account of his doom. Thus reasoning, God has been greatly dishonored, and, in opposition to his solemn asseveration, he has been declared a respecter of persons. The literal scriptural account will vindicate Jehovah, and throw all the blame on Esau himself. Hating and loving, in the words of scripture, often signify ardent, and less devoted affection. Jesus says, "Except a man hate father and mother, wife and children," &c. So it is said, "God loved Jacob, and hated Esau" God's disapprobation of Esau was owing to the profanity of his character, and to that the text refers.

I. LET US LOOK AT ESAU'S PROFANE BARTER, AND CONSIDER THOSE WHO IMITATE HIS CONDUCT. Esau, as the first-born of Isaac, possessed many privileges, and was heir to many blessings. These privileges were two-fold.

1. *Temporal.*

(1.) He had pre-eminence of authority and power over the rest of the family.

(2.) He had a double portion of the paternal estate.

2. *Spiritual.*

(1.) From the first-born, before the law, descended the priesthood of the family.

(2.) Of him and his seed was the Messiah to spring.

(3.) He was first to receive the especial blessing of the father, which was uttered in the spirit of prophecy, and was associated with peculiar and precious promises. Now, this birthright he sold. The circumstances are given to us, Gen. xxv. 29, &c. Was not this an extremely foolish barter? To prefer one plain meal to his birthright? How can it be accounted for? It was the result,

1. *Of inconsideration.* He did not ponder and weigh the matter; he acted hastily, &c.

2. *Appetite was another cause.* So powerful that he could not restrain it until food was prepared, &c.

3. *An irreverent depreciation of spiritual things.* He held the birthright in low esteem; he was a worldly and carnal man. A small amount of piety would have given to it a high sense of value. He was deficient alike in personal piety towards God, and filial piety towards his father; the two are often wedded. Such was the profane barter; but many have acted as unwisely, and with equal profanity. Look at Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, who for a number of garments lied to Naaman and his master, and became the subject of a fearful leprosy; look at Judas, who for thirty pieces of silver, &c.; look at Ananias and Sapphira, who to retain a portion of their property, lied to the Holy Ghost; look at Herod, who dared to receive the flattering homage of the crowd, and was eaten up of worms. All these were bad bargains, equally with Esau's. Are there none here who are acting with equal profanity? Those who sell themselves for vanity; seek the applause of their fellow-creatures, &c.; make this their God. Those who sell themselves for money; for this will do any thing; they sacrifice truth, honesty, goodness, &c.; all is devoted to this, &c. Those who sacrifice themselves on the altar of pleasure lovers of pleasure, &c. Those who exchange their souls for rioting and excess; in most cases these bargains are worse than that of Esau. He did obtain a good—a meal; he had his hunger alleviated; but how often the sinner receives evil, and evil only, for the fearful price he pays. We have more light than Esau had, &c. He regretted; but not so with many around us, &c. This leads us to notice,

II. ESAU'S UNAVAILING REPENTANCE. He evidently altered his mind—saw his folly—labored to undo the deed. He was very urgent, and sorrowful, and intent; but his repentance,

1. *Seems to have been carnal in its motives.* He regrets not his depravity; he acknowledges not his sin; he does not abase himself before God. Doubtless, the worldly part of the blessing was what he chiefly deplored.

2. *His repentance was too late.* The word was pronounced; Isaac could not recall it; the blessing was irrevocably transferred. Esau's repentance, I fear, is but too common in the stead of repentance unto life. We may exclude one sin for another; we may abandon a sin on account of its influence on our health, or reputation, or property; we may give up vices from necessity, not having the power of gratification; we may do so through sheer dread of future consequences, and not from dislike to the sin; we may alter our mind when it is too late; the conscience may become seared and callous; the Spirit may cease to strive; put it off till the door is shut. Many have wept on their death-beds in vain; many in the prison-house of hell, for "there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth," &c. Then what is the application of the whole?

1. *Let me glance at your condition.* You have an immortal spirit of amazing powers, &c.; you are responsible to God; you are sinful, exposed to death, but redeemed. Christ has opened a way of life. The gospel reveals it, &c. You can accept, or reject.

2. *Let me glance at your duty and interest.* Now to accept of the blessing of salvation. This year, though nearly finished; this night, though almost ended, by earnest prayer and faith turn to the Lord. Let the soul's salvation be preferred to all things.

3. *Let me exhort you in reference to the sins and dangers of this season.** Now is a time of peculiar danger, frivolity, mirth, carousing, indolence, &c. Oh! be on your guard, especially you young persons. You who have made a Christian profession, let your consistent conduct reprove and silence gainsayers.

THE CHOICE OF MOSES.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."—HEBREWS xi. 24–26.

AMONG all the illustrious Old Testament saints, Moses occupies the most dignified and promising place. His whole life was one of signal and illustrious events. The impression that he made at his birth, by his captivating beauty, so that his parents resolved to save him, not fearing the edict and wrath of the king; his amazing preservation, when floating in the fragile ark on the waters of the Nile; his favorable reception into the palace of Pharaoh, under the auspices of the king's daughter; his amazing privilege of obtaining learning and influence in the court of royalty; but now we no longer watch the workings of providence for him, but we see him also operating with that providence, and taking his stand with his afflicted countrymen after the flesh. There were many then living who might sway the sceptre of Egypt, but probably only one in all things fit to be the emancipator and ruler over Israel. To this our direct attention is called, "By faith," &c. You are aware how the Israelites entered Egypt during the time of Joseph; how they multiplied, so as to become an immense people; how they were cruelly entreated and oppressed by their tyrannic taskmasters; how their increase was attempted to be bounded by the destruction of their male children; and now the crisis of deliverance is drawing near. Moses is to be the great agent in God's hand. "And by faith," &c. Observe,

I. THE CHOICE MOSES MADE.

II. THE THINGS MOSES SACRIFICED.

III. THE TIME IN WHICH HE MADE THIS CHOICE AND SACRIFICE. And,

IV. THE GREAT PRINCIPLE BY WHICH HE WAS ACTUATED.

I. THE CHOICE MOSES MADE. He chose,

1. *The condition of his afflicted country men.* Men generally aspire to the society and circle of those above them; men generally choose the society of the affluent and influential, or of the intellectual and cultivated. His countrymen were poor, in the lowest walks of life; they were slaves in the direst bondage; they were treated as the refuse of the nation. Not noble after the world's reckoning; not rich; not walk

* Preached during Christmas festivities.

ing in the paths of honor, or literature, or science; but slaves groaning in bondage; yet he chose them—became one with them; as he could not at once raise them to earthly dignity, he descended step by step, and became their friend, and companion, and brother. Before you censure Moses, do not forget they were the people of God; the objects of God's smile, and love, and care; and were destined to act a more remarkable part in the drama of the world's history than any other nation under heaven.

2. *He chose religious reproach.* "The reproach of Christ." Literally, of the Messiah. The Israelites were the descendants of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Unto them God had promised to send the Messiah. These prophecies and promises they cherished; in them they trusted; for these they hoped. No doubt their services and conversation respected the coming of the Messiah; and for this belief and worship they were reproached. The Egyptians were idolaters, ignorant of the true God; therefore the Israelites were despised, and reviled, and scorned, and treated as fools and fanatics. True fervid piety has ever thus been treated. But the reproach of Christ, is it not better than to be reproached by God, or the reproach of conscience? Now this was the choice of Moses. Observe,

II. THE THINGS MOSES SACRIFICED. Now by these we are to determine the heroism, the patriotism, the piety of the act. He was not shut up to the condition of the Israelites, or to the reproach of Christ; he had worldly glory, wealth, and pleasure at his command.

1. *He sacrificed the dignity of a prince.* He had been the adopted of royalty; but he severed the connection, and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he traced his lineage back to Israel, and to that stock, though now in poverty and oppression, he adhered. Survey the contrast; a prince-royal—and a slave. Yet he despised the one, with all its authority and glittering show, and preferred the other. A sceptre did not fire his ambitious eye; a throne did not absorb his thoughts; a crown did not elicit his desires.

2. *He sacrificed the riches of royalty.* Egypt at that time was one of the oldest and wealthiest monarchies; her coffers were full of treasures; as a royal prince, they were within his grasp; but the golden dust of the nation, the crowns and diadems of the court, corrupted not his soul, nor fascinated his heart.

3. *He sacrificed the pleasures of a palace.* And what sensual enjoyments were not within his reach? What could mind devise, or heart desire, or imagination conceive, which were not at his hand? These pleasures of sin formed the atmosphere of his royal residence; these flowers of enjoyment grew at his feet; these retreats of gratification were ever at his command; but he magnanimously, and in the fear of his God, sacrificed the whole. Observe,

III. THE TIME AT WHICH HE MADE THIS CHOICE AND SACRIFICE. "When he was come to years." He was now forty years of age; in the very prime and vigor of life. It was not, therefore, a mad eccentricity of youth, much less the cynical declaration of old age, satiated with enjoyment; but when he could best reason upon the value both of his choice and sacrifice. He had long enjoyed the dignities and the honors of royalty; he was now nearer to the climax of earthly glory; he was now possessed of sufficient experience to determine with wisdom, &c.; his resolution and conduct we have placed before you. Well may we inquire, therefore, as to,

IV. THE GREAT PRINCIPLES BY WHICH HE WAS ACTUATED. These are placed in the text:—

1. *Faith.* "By faith," &c. He believed to be of the seed of Abraham was truer dignity, than to be the son of a pagan princess; he believed to be one of God's poor people was more exalted, than to be the sovereign of an idolatrous nation; he believed to be the reproached, as one hoping in the Messiah, was better than to enjoy the smiles and plaudits of the courtiers of a palace; he had faith in God, as a true God, and in the Messiah he had promised. Another principle,

2. *Was sanctified self-interest.* "He had respect," &c. He knew of the prophecies and promises connected with the faith and service of God. Now, this faith weighed the grandeur of the honors, and riches, and enjoyments of Egypt in the right scale; and he found it better for him thus to choose, and thus to sacrifice. Egypt's royal honors and treasures were but for a season; the short span of life; evanescent; "For the fashion of this world," &c. He saw, too, that poverty and reproach, &c., were

also very transient; but he saw the rewards of faithful obedience to Christ as having reference to heaven, and to eternity; that they were celestial and everlasting; "He, therefore, had respect," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *I ask, was his choice wise?* I appeal to the honors he had on earth; I appeal to the communications of heaven; to the revelation of the divine glory; to Pisgah's top; to the heaven of heavens. Nearly 4000 years have transpired since the decease of Moses; where are the honors, treasures, and enjoyments of Egypt? Where the renowned Moses?

2. *Then imitate his conduct.*

3. *Act upon the same principles.*

4. *And ensure the same high reward.*

THE BURNING BUSH AN EMBLEM OF THE CHURCH.

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."—Exodus iii. 2.

Our text relates to a series of wonderful persons and events: Moses, the great Jewish lawgiver, and deliverer of the children of Israel; an Angel, yet not one of the ordinary intelligences, but obviously the uncreated and ever-blessed Son of God, verse 4; an interesting phenomenon—a bush enveloped in flame, and yet unconsumed; that phenomenon symbolizing the condition and preservation of the seed of Abraham, who were now enduring the sore and grievous oppression of Pharaoh in Egypt, and yet by the providence of God were sustained and preserved. But we have selected the text with a view to its application to the church of God in all ages, and desire to ground upon it the following propositions:—

I. The true church of God is not associated with earthly grandeur and magnificence. What is the emblem in the text? The lofty oak—the towering cedar? no; the bramble bush, of apparently mean and low appearance. Nothing in it to please the eye; nothing to fascinate the imagination; nothing to attract the notice of the intellectual and great. But what is God's church? Why, what it ever has been, and must be—the body of those who believe in God, and obey him. Now wherever these are found, in whatever class of society or nation, they are the true church of God. Of course, there never has been a nation of such; and therefore never, in the true sense of the term, a national church of God. Now, the truly and sincerely pious have ever formed the minority of any and every sectional denomination, and as such, have always been among the despised and contemned of the human family. Ask the opinion of the world respecting this pure, unsophisticated, spiritual piety, and they laugh at it, deride it; ask the nominal members of the visible church; they despise them, and look with contempt upon them as fanatics, puritans, and righteous overmuch. Few of the members of the church of Jesus are found in king's houses; few in the mansions of the noble; few among the great and renowned of this world. Even yet the church of God is a little flock, and appearing to the eye of sense as one of the things that are not. The present position of the church is like that of the bush in the desert. Where was this marvellous phenomenon seen? Not in heaven; not in Eden; but in the desert. Behold the sterility and dreariness, and see the moral aspect of the world; behold the dangers of the desert from beasts of prey, and awful storms, and see the imminent perils which surround the earth in which we live. But allow me to remark, that the church of God is in this world for the world's advantage. The church of Christ is the very conservation of the world. It bears it up; life-boat; hospital for its morally diseased; illumines it with the light of hope, and by its sanctifying influence shall finally make it to bud and blossom as the rose; see Isaiah xxxv. 1, &c.

II. The condition of the church has ever been that of trial and suffering. It was planted amidst persecution; and was not one of its earliest members a martyr to the envious feelings of his brother? Behold it afterwards assailed with the ridicule of the old world; then riding on the bosom of the waters of the deluge; then mourning under the despotic decree in Egypt; afterwards in captivity by the waters of Babylon; now emerging into notice beneath the wings of the Sun of Righteousness, but immediately hated and

persecuted to the death of the Messiah; after the death of Christ, apostles, confessors, and unnumbered hosts of its disciples, moistening the very soil of the world with their blood; passing through ten fiery persecutions, until hell had exhausted its resources of torment, and the world appeared one vast aceldama, or field of human gore. But allow me to refer to one peculiar and fearful instance of suffering to which the church of God has been exposed. No sooner was the Christian religion secularized, than it became the instrument of torture and oppression. Liberty of conscience was assailed; spiritual purity despised; and the best and worthiest of its members galled and injured by those in the earthly ascendency. What myriads have been persecuted to the death by papal Rome! The woman of Babylon is dyed scarlet with the blood of the martyred saints! Every state church has been a persecuting church. How was it that the rivers of Scotland became like the crimsoned Nile of Egypt? By prelacy, which was thrust upon the people at the point of the bayonet, and by the mouth of the cannon. What has been the state of conscientious Nonconformists in England? In 1662, two thousand ministers were ejected on St. Bartholomew's day from the church of England, because they could not assent and consent to every thing in the Book of Common Prayer. An act was passed, that no man should hold an office of civil trust, unless he took the sacrament at the church of England; another act, that no congregation of more than five adults should meet for worship except in the church of England; another, that no minister should live within five miles of a borough or city, and that schools should not be taught except by ministers of the church of England. During the reign of Charles II., eight thousand persons died in prison, and from that period to the restoration, fifty-two thousand more. Pagans have persecuted the church of God; Mahometans have done so; the world has done so; but not all together a hundredth part with the persecution that has been exercised by the dominant party over the sects who could not conform to her principles and forms. How has humanity thus been disgraced—religion rendered odious to the heathen—skepticism confirmed! How have demons rejoiced, and, if possible, angels wept! What a book of martyrs will be opened in the day of doom! What a scroll of lamentation, sorrow, and wo will then be spread before an assembled world!

III. THE CHURCH OF GOD HAS WITHIN IT THE ELEMENT OF PERPETUITY. "Not burnt." Not consumed. Look at this,

1. *As a striking fact.* Is it not so? How wonderfully the church of God flourished in Egypt—has flourished in all ages; the fire has purified, but never consumed. It has survived all opposition; has had earth and hell against it; and yet lives, yet prospers; the gates of hell have not prevailed, &c.

2. *For this there is a sufficient reason.* God was in the bush; he spake out of it. This is the secret of its life and perpetuity. His wisdom has baffled the counsel of the wicked; his arm supported the church; he took away the consuming principle from the fire; made the wrath to praise him, &c., Psalm xlvi. 1, &c. Where are the enemies of the church of God? Where Pharaoh? Balak? Herod? Where the Roman emperors? Where Julian? Where the judges of the Inquisition? Where the officers of the Star Chamber? Where the impious Bonner? the iron-hearted Jeffries? Where are they all? Gone down to the grave with infamy! "So let all thine enemies perish, O God!" &c. But where is the church? Living—prospering—growing; extending its boughs to the South Seas—to Australia—to China; and is destined to become a universal praise throughout all the earth.

APPLICATION.

1. *Understand the nature of Christ's church.*

2. *Abhor persecution.* Value and hold sacred all the precious boon of liberty of conscience.

3. *Look to Jehovah for success.* He can help, and he will; he ever has done so.

4. *Sympathize with the persecuted and the tried.* The true church is yet exposed to suffering; as in France, Switzerland, Scotland, &c.

THE MYSTERIOUS PILLAR.

"And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night."—EXODUS xiii. 21.

The dispensation of Moses was a dispensation of miracles; the manifestation of God to Moses was miraculous, when he revealed himself to him in the burning bush; it was by successive miracles God compelled Pharaoh to let the Israelites depart from Egypt; and the history of Israel, from leaving Egypt to entering Canaan, was but one chain of wonderful events. This morning we select one of these divine manifestations for the subject of our meditation. "And the Lord went before," &c. Let us consider it,

I. Literally as a divine interposition on behalf of the Israelites.

1. *The pillar of cloud was miraculous, or supernatural.* It was not a common cloud, but the cloud of the divine presence; that which veiled from them the grandeur and overwhelming glory of God. God has generally thus shrouded himself, when he has held audience with his people. It overspread the mountain; it filled the holiest place in the tabernacle; it covered the mercy-seat; it filled the temple, &c. So it was now the symbol of God's presence with his people.

2. *It was the constant and infallible guide of Israel.* Hence its appearance was altered to suit the alternate seasons of day and night. It never left them; no, not for a moment. By day, it was a *cloud;* by night, as a pillar of *fire.* God is an ever present and ever suitable help to his people. He is with his people at all times, and under all circumstances. Day of prosperity, night of adversity; day of health, and night of affliction; day of life, and night of death.

3. *This pillar was the defence of Israel.* Hence, when in peril from the Egyptian host, instead of being in front of the camp of Israel, it removed and went behind, and intervened between them and their enemies. All our security is of God. We should have no might against our foes, if the arm of the Lord was not on our side. See the sufficiency of the defence; the omnipotent Deity. Before the Egyptians could have injured Israel, they must have overcome Jehovah. Well might the church sing, "The Lord is on our side, therefore we will not fear," &c. "The Lord of hosts is with us," &c.

4. *The pillar of cloud and fire was the joy and confidence of Israel.* How delightful to know that God was for them; to have with them the token and sign of his presence. Nothing can be equal to a sense of the gracious presence of God. If so, I cannot err—I cannot faint—I cannot be destroyed; all must be well. The form of the cloud was calculated to produce this confidence. It was a pillar; not like other clouds. There was the appearance of order and arrangement, of firmness and stability. The providence of God is subservient to the designs of grace, &c.

5. *The pillar of cloud, &c., was the oracle of the Israelites.* From thence came the voice of God to Moses, verses 15–26. See Exodus xxxiii. 9. Now this clearly shows us, that if we are to secure the guidance and protection of God, we must hearken to the voice of the Lord; we must obey the word of the Lord. Now, God no longer speaks to us from the cloud; but the apostle says, "We have a more sure word of prophecy," &c. 2 Peter i. 19. Let us consider the pillar, &c.,

II. As typical of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. *It typified the constitution of Christ's person.* Symbol of God's presence; in it dwelt the Deity; it was the garment of Jehovah. So God came to us in the person of Jesus. "His name shall be called Immanuel." "God with us." "And the word was made flesh," &c. Now, the cloud was the emblem of Christ's body; hence "God was manifest in the flesh."

2. *It typified Christ's redeeming work.* The pillar of cloud was connected with the deliverance of Israel, and the overthrow of their enemies. "So Jesus came to save his people," &c. One exceedingly appropriate passage, Luke i. 68–72. In doing this, he delivered us from the bondage of iniquity, &c. He also came that "he might destroy the works of the devil." Observe,

3. *It typified Christ as the light and guide of mankind.* Jesus is described as a "light," &c. He said, "I am the light of the world." He came to reveal the way to God—the way to heaven. He marked the path through this world to eternal glory. So fully he did this, that he said, "I am the way," &c.

4. *It typified Christ's glorious presence with his church.* When his church was sent forth in the persons of the apostles and disciples, he said, "Lo! I am with you," &c. And to the church he is all and in

all. He guides—protects—cheers; he is its glory, and its defence; he is the oracle of the church. God says to his people, "Hear ye him." The word and ordinances are the signs of his presence.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let the subject greatly encourage the people of God.* Christ is with you. He will never leave; he will conduct to glory. Believe, love, and obey him.

2. *He is the only director to glory and eternal life.*

MANOAH AND HIS WIFE.

"And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God," &c.—JUDGES xiii. 22, 23.

BEFORE the time of Moses and the prophets, God often manifested himself to the patriarchs, by appearing in the form of a man, or by visions of the night; afterwards, these supernatural appearances became more rare. A few visits, however, are recorded. Among these is the striking instance to which the text refers; see verse 3, &c. This vision was repeated, verse 8, &c. It is obvious from the name assumed, that this angel of the Lord was the Son of God, his name being "Secret, or Wonderful." We see in this subject an exhibition of weak faith and gloomy fears; and of strong faith and cheering hope.

I. WE SEE THE EXHIBITION OF WEAK FAITH AND GLOOMY FEARS. "We shall surely die," &c. Here Manoah was evidently bound by the fetters of a superstition, which has prevailed in all ages, that supernatural appearances were premonitions of death. We do not marvel that sinful beings should be agitated and alarmed. There was a time when angels conversed with our first sire, and when our parents held joyous communion with God; but sin dissolved the fellowship, and clothed man with the garment of sin, and shame, and fear. Where unbelief reigns, or where faith is feeble, a view of the divine character and glory is calculated to overwhelm the soul if you,

1. *Contemplate the divine holiness, and our own pollution.* God spotless; man depraved. "From the crown of the head," &c. Contemplate,

2. *The divine justice, and man's guilt.* One swaying a sceptre of righteous, impartial equity; and man laden with guilt, his sins crying for vengeance.

3. *The divine truth, and our excuseless condition.* The edict has been declared, that "The soul that sinneth shall die." Shall God lie, or the sinner be punished?

4. *The divine ability and our helplessness.* God has power to execute all he has said. If he resolve, we cannot escape.

5. *The divine conduct in reference to the guilty, and our equal guiltiness.* He has stepped forth to punish; he has whet his glittering sword; he has poured his vengeance—and why not upon us? Why should we escape? Now, in all these points weak faith reasons, and that plausibly, against itself. "We shall surely die," &c. Let us now turn our attention to the display,

II. OF STRONG FAITH AND CHEERING HOPE. "But his wife said," &c. Now here we see the very opposite reasoning and inferences from the same premises and facts. The reasoning of Manoah's wife refers to three particulars:—

1. *She concludes favorably, from the acceptance of their sacrifice.* "If the Lord," &c. Now, the acceptance of the offering was evidently a token for good. It has been so in all generations; it was so with Abel, &c. Now, the Christian may reason thus, from two important considerations:—

(1.) From God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice. All previous ones derived their virtue from this. Christ has presented an effectual and all-efficient one. "It speaks better things," &c. This the Christian pleads, and from this derives his hope.

(2.) From God's acceptance of us through this sacrifice. "The sacrifices of God," &c. Now, the Christian has presented this; he has laid himself on the sacred altar; "God has mercifully heard and accepted," &c.; but if he had resolved to destroy, he would have accepted neither.

2. *She concludes favorably, from the revelation he had made.* This to her was a most interesting revelation, and it was evidently one of great favor. Now, thus the Christian also may reason. God has revealed his mind to us, and it is emphatically a revelation of mercy and hope; a revelation of grace and compassion. The scriptures were given that we might have abundant consolation, and good hope.

3. *She reasoned favorably, from the promise which the angel gave;* verse 5. Now, the revelation which God has given us is also one of great and precious promises; and these promises all meet in Jesus Christ, the great deliverer, and are all yea and amen, &c. Our deliverance from evil, by his power and grace, is the leading promise, and is associated with a series of promises referring both to time and eternity. Now, surely these are striking evidences that God does not mean to destroy us.

APPLICATION.

1. *That the germ of religion is confidence towards God.* To believe his love to us; to receive it; to trust in it; venture our souls fully on it. This is the province of faith. How desirable, therefore, that it should be strong and vigorous!

2. *We often see striking displays of Christian confidence and courage, where we least expect to see them.* We should have expected strong faith in Manoah. He should have been the shield to his wife's fears, &c.; the stronger vessel; but morally he is the weaker, and his wife has to reason away his fears and dread. This is not the only instance. We see the like in the holy women who dared to go with Christ to the cross, &c. Priscilla, in concert with her husband, undertook to teach even the eloquent Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly.

3. *Have we a lively and cheering hope in the mercy of God, through Christ Jesus?* Let me urge this upon you. How necessary this is! We preach to you for this. Do you feel this? Have you confidence in God's love?

BOAZ AND RUTH.

"And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."—RUTH ii. 11, 12.

IN the days of the judges of Israel, a man of the name of Elimelech, with his wife Naomi, went to reside in the land of Moab in consequence of the famine which prevailed in Bethlehem Judah. During his residence there, his two sons married with the daughters of Moab; the name of one of these was Ruth, the person addressed in the text. It came to pass in this mutable and dying state of things, that both Elimelech and his two sons died, and thus Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah were left to exclaim, in the bitterness of the grief of widowhood, "Lover and friend thou hast put far from us, and our acquaintance," &c. Naomi determined to return to her own people, and Ruth, who evinced the deepest affection for her, resolved to accompany her. When Ruth was advised to act as her sister-in-law had done, she exclaimed, "Entreat me not to leave thee," &c. i. 16. Ruth did accompany her, and her kindness had been made known to Boaz, a rich and near kinsman with whom she had now her first interview, and who thus addressed her in the text. "It hath fully," &c. We design to accommodate the subject to those who abandon the world and unite themselves with the church of God. Observe,

I. THE ABANDONMENT. She had forsaken her country and friends. Every believer in the day of his conversion must do the same. We must abandon,

1. *Our original state and condition.* Metaphorically we are said to be far from God. Aliens—outcasts, ready to perish. We are in the region of the shadow of death. On the dark mountains of iniquity. Now, like the prodigal our steps must be retraced. We must not remain in the land of rebellion, in the enemy's country. Like Abraham, we must come out, &c. Like Ruth, we must take our departure.

2. *We must abandon associates and friends.* "And hast left thy father," &c. We cannot be confidential bosom companions of the ungodly, and yet love and serve God. The friend of the world is the enemy of God. Religion is entirely personal. A man must be so for himself; he cannot take his acquaintances with him, and therefore must go without them; he cannot take his family; mother, wife, &c. Suppose Ruth had tried this; her efforts would have been vain, they did not see as she did, nor feel as she did. We must not therefore wait for others, but be in earnest for ourselves. When one wanted to go and bid adieu to friends, Christ said, "If any man love," &c. So when one wanted to bury his father, he said, "Let the dead," &c. Now we observe,

(1.) That this abandonment is difficult. It is not congenial to flesh and blood; it is therefore represented as a sacrifice. "Present yourselves," &c. "Strive to enter in," &c. And it is so difficult that we notice,

(2.) It can only be done by faith. Abraham did it by faith; so doubtless did Ruth. Faith recognises the peril of our state, the necessity of repentance, &c. A faith losing sight of present pleasure and riches, for future pleasures, and enduring treasures of righteousness. By faith Moses did thus. Consider minutely his case. Observe,

II. THE CHOICE. "And art come unto a place," &c. Now in choosing the people of God for our people we resolve,

1. *To conform to their maxims and habits.* To walk with them; to unite with them in their duties; to adopt their costume; to speak their language, and to be incorporated with them in all their services and engagements. We resolve,

2. *To share their burdens and perils.* This is the end of society, to sympathize and aid each other. "Bear ye one," &c. Thus it is in the body, the hand assists the foot, &c. Thus Ruth had identified herself with Naomi; now this can only be done by cherishing a liberal and benevolent spirit, feeling our kindredness, &c. This choice may properly include,

3. *A desire to participate of their various blessings.* If Ruth resolved to leave all for Naomi, why not enjoy Naomi's advantages? "We will go with you," &c. Yes, and we say to those who are without, "Come with us," &c. There is no monopoly in spiritual blessings, there is bread enough and to spare. We do not envy the new convert the fatted calf, &c. Notice,

III. THE PRAYER. "The Lord recompense thee," &c. We ought to pray for one another; especially for young converts. Now this prayer is,

1. *Very comprehensive.* "Recompense." "A full reward." The blessings of the God of Israel were princely; satisfying; delighting the soul; inconceivably precious. God oftentimes gives a recompense in kind; he did so to Ruth; he did so to Job; at any rate they shall have the principal, and a hundred-fold interest in the world to come. This prayer is,

2. *Certain in its realization.* The Lord can fulfil it; he will fulfil it. His nature disposes him; his promises pledge him. His Son intercedes, &c

3. *This prayer was connected with a congratulatory declaration of safety.* "Under whose wings," &c. How checkered is the dream of life, and how exposed is man to danger! God is the pavilion, &c. Our rock, and fortress. Under his wings we may indeed trust; here is comfort and security. Who will harm you? &c. "The Lord God is a sun and shield," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *How desirable that providential visitations should be sanctified!* The death of Ruth's husband was the means of her uniting with God's people.

2. *How necessary to cherish and perfect good desires!* She thought, resolved, acted. Have you done so?

3. *Decision in religion will have its reward.* "As long as he sought the Lord," &c.

ELIJAH'S SINFUL FLIGHT.

"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die," &c.—1 KINGS xix. 4.

NOTHING is calculated to edify us more than an acquaintance with the experience of saints who have gone before, and who, having borne the burden and heat of the day, have entered into rest. We are exhorted "to be followers," &c., but how can it be, unless we are intimate with their history, and study their character? Elijah was a very illustrious servant of God. His life is full of the marvellous, and we wonder how persons, who have received a religious education, can prefer the reading of works of mere fiction to the astonishing facts recorded in the prophet's life. Our subject, however, presents him to our notice under unfavorable circumstances. His sun at this time, if not eclipsed, is overcast with dark and intercepting clouds. To profit by the theme the text supplies, let us inquire,

I. WHAT WAS THE STATE OF MIND HE DISPLAYED. We perceive a display,

1. *Of great fear.* The preceding chapter relates his signal triumph on mount Carmel. It details the extraordinary success of prayer—the prayer of Elijah. The heavens, which had been as brass, had sent down refreshing rain on the previous dry and

parched earth; but now he is unnerved, his courage fails, his heart sinks, his spirit drops. At what? At the oath of the impious Jezebel. Read from the first verse to the text—he who stood before four hundred and fifty idolatrous priests, and had commanded them to be slain, as you will see in the fortieth verse of the previous chapter, now begins to fear, and manifests the utmost dread.

2. *We observe manifest impatience.* He is evidently fretting himself. His spirit is ruffled—the equilibrium is lost—the nicely poised balance of feeling is deranged, and his whole demeanor indicates haste, restlessness, and rashness. Doubtless he was weary and exhausted by his journey, but to give himself up to haste, was decidedly wrong. How necessary is self-government and self-possession! How delightful in patience to possess our souls—to be passive in the hands of Deity! Elijah had previously displayed amazing perseverance, but faith and patience seem now both to fail.

3. *He presented an unhallowed prayer to Deity.* Many have supposed that he had had intimations of his translation, but being now out of humor with his condition, says, "I forego the superior transit, let me die," &c. We do not say that this desire is always unhallowed. Paul said, "he had rather depart," &c. The mariner may wish for the haven, the prisoner for liberty, the traveller for his home; but it is not right to desire, except in deference to God's will; rather with Job, say piously even in great suffering, "I will wait," &c., than seek it by prayers not authorized. We have no such directions. No promise to such a prayer. Elijah had much to experience, much to teach, and much to do, before his labors could terminate. Let us, then,

II. Endeavor to account for it. We do this on the ground of human infirmity, infirmities which attach to the good, and the holy, and eminently pious. Elijah was a moral sun, and yet there are spots upon the sun. We have no spotless examples but one, who, though he was made sin for us, yet knew no sin. It is amazing, too, that the failings of pious men have ever been in those points of character for which they were most eminent. Look at Abraham, ingenuous, implicitly trusting in God, and yet concealing the truth respecting Sarah to Pharaoh, and who fell into the same sin precisely with Abimelech afterwards. Look at Lot, whose righteous soul was vexed, &c.; and yet in solitude became the victim of sin, and that sin incest. Look at Moses, the meekest man; see his condemnation of the evil spirit of his countrymen, and yet the sin that excluded him from the land of promise, was rashness and impetuosity. Look at David, the man of inward purity,—after God's own heart, and yet he falls into the polluted snare of sensuality. Look at Peter, the heroic disciple who avows his resolution to live and die with Christ, yet first follows afar off, and then denies, &c. Look at John, the loving disciple, yet he was one who prayed that fire from heaven might consume the Samaritans, because they received them not. Now these were not mere accidents, but a continuous series of proofs that good men may not only fail, but fail in the very things for which they are pre-eminent. This may arise,

(1.) From too much self-confidence. We fear this or that sin, but feel assured that we shall not fall into others. And this,

(2.) Causes unwatchfulness. Our excellencies and virtues require watching. We are vulnerable all over. No part can be left unguarded with safety. Let us consider,

III. How we may improve by it.

1. *It should lead us to diligent self-examination and circumspection.* Prove ourselves, &c. Try to ascertain our real state. Be faithful, &c. Be jealous, &c. Take heed to our spirit and temper, &c. Oh, yes! on the temporary defection of Elijah, it is written, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

2. *It shows the importance of continually depending on the grace of God.* His grace is sufficient. Not our knowledge, or talents, or graces, or experience, &c. He is to us God all-sufficient, &c.

3. *It points out the value of Christian magnanimity.* "Add to your faith, virtue, or courage." "The fear of man bringeth a snare." How necessary are holy resolutions! "Be strong, quit yourselves like men." "Be strong in the Lord," &c. How happy when, like Joshua and Caleb, we can be vigorous and hopeful; or, like the three Hebrew worthies, and Daniel, firm and invincible; or, like those described by the apostle, who accepted not deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

4. *It may console Christians when bowed down by a sense of their infirmities.* Our adversary suits his wiles to our circumstances and feelings. When confident, he would incite us to presumption—when depressed, he would sink us to despondency. Let feeble saints remember Elijah, and not be swallowed up with sorrow, and especially Elijah's God, who is as pitiful as ever, who knows our infirmities, and remembers that we are but dust.

Finally, *Our subject shows us the worth and propriety of that prayer,* "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

ELISHA'S ENEMIES AND GUARD.

"And when the servant of the man of God was risen," &c.—2 KINGS vi. 15–17.

THE faithful servants of God in all ages have been hated, and often put to death on account of the obnoxious messages they have had to deliver to the enemies of Jehovah. How great must have been the wrath of Pharaoh when Moses delivered to him the demands of God, in reference to his oppressed and suffering people; but he feared not the wrath of the great king, &c. So you remember how Elijah was called to deliver the most unwelcome truths to Ahab and Jezebel, but in the fear and strength of God he dared to do it. This has been the command of God, that they must declare faithfully his truths, whether men will hear or forbear. Elisha had been fulfilling his prophetical duties faithfully in reference to the king of Syria, and he came therefore with horses and chariots, against the man of God. Elisha's servant, having risen early, beheld the warlike host, and came to his master, saying, "Alas!" &c. And he answered, "Fear not," &c. Let us consider several propositions, by which the text may be rendered instructive and edifying.

I. THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE SURROUNDED BY A HOST OF ENEMIES. The aspect of those seen in the text was exceedingly terrible. "A host," &c. Their appearance too was warlike and formidable, "horses and chariots." I take no notice on this occasion of the enemies within, the legion of doubts and fears, &c. Nor of our adversaries in the world. "Marvel not that the world hateth you" But there is a host of fallen spirits; Satan and the powers of darkness. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. The leader of this host of spiritual foes, is described as our adversary; the destroyer, the prince of darkness—the devil; he is likened to a roaring lion, &c. He is in league with all the fallen spirits to do evil, to war against God and to destroy souls. There are several features in this host of malevolent spirits of an awful kind.

1. *Their invisibility.* Not observed by our eyes. May injure us unnoticed; may direct all their missiles unperceived.

2. *Their power and energy.* Angels excel in strength; fallen spirits doubtless possess it in an awful degree. In the case of Job, by a great wind they smote the four corners of the house, so that it fell to the ground; in the case of bodily possessions, how it brought to extreme wretchedness and misery those who were its victims!

3. *Restlessness and activity.* It is probable, that as spirits, they weary not, know nothing of fatigue; so that they can keep up incessant hostility. Then there is,

4. *Their extreme malevolence and hatred to us.* Inspired with deepest envy; full of bitter hate and wrath; longing to destroy and tear to pieces; desiring to blot out all excellency, and involve in misery, black and hopeless as their own, all the creatures of God.

5. *Their access to the mind is another fearful faculty they possess.* They can act upon the understanding, judgment, imagination, passions, &c. This is clearly expressed when in reference to wrath, &c., we are called not to give place to the devil.

Finally. *There is their number.* It has been conjectured that the countless myriads of the redeemed are destined to occupy their vacated thrones. The poet has said in reference to them,

> "They throng the air, they darken heaven,
> And crowd this lower world."

What a fearful enemy! We remark,

II. THAT A CONTEMPLATION OF THIS ADVERSE HOST IS CALCULATED TO PRODUCE FEAR. And his servant said, "Alas! my master, how shall we do?" &c. Our fears may arise,

1. *From a sense of our own weakness.* Our knowledge cannot grapple with their intelligence and craftiness; our power of

resistance with their deadly missiles. The lamb is not more unable to combat the lion, or the dove the vulture, than man these evil foes. How shall we do?

2. *From a conviction of our tendency to evil.* They worsted our parents in their original purity. How inferior our ability! We have the very seeds of evil within us. Much ignorance, and error, and unbelief, and superstition, and fear, and passion. Their fiery darts ignite these elements of sin. We have traitors within the citadel, who would open the gates and betray us. Hearts of unbelief, &c.

3. *From the recollection of those who have been ruined by this host.* Our world has been made to resemble a valley of dry bones. The number of those slain is thousands of thousands; many of these we have known; need we wonder, therefore, that the people of God should exclaim, "Alas! what shall we do?" We observe,

III. That God has abundantly provided for the security of his people. "The mountain was full of horses," &c. God is the great defence and protection of his people; the munition of rocks. He is as a wall of fire, &c. Then, in addition to this, he has appointed a perfect panoply of spiritual armor for our defence; this is described by the apostle Paul, "Put on the whole armor of God." But our text introduces another kind of defence; it is that of angels; the spirits of light and glory; the hosts of heaven, &c. You know it is written, "The angel of the Lord," &c. "He will give his angels charge," &c. "Are they not all ministering spirits," &c. It is also written, "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." These were often employed to serve the patriarchs—to instruct, counsel, and deliver the prophets; they were now the body-guard of Elisha; they are often the watchers, keepers, and deliverers of the saints. This is a cheering consideration, when we reflect on the presence of the evil malignant spirits, that however terrible, yet around our path "there are horses of fire, and chariots of fire." But we observe,

IV. Gracious assistance is essential to our receiving comfort and encouragement from the defence God has appointed. The servant saw the foe, but not the guardian host. A striking exhibition of the influence of fear and unbelief. We fear and tremble when the eye of faith is closed; but we exclaim by faith as Elisha did, "Fear not; for they that be with us," &c. Now to realize this, and have confidence from it,

1. *God has given us his word.* He has filled it with declarations of love and mercy; full of promises, &c.; and we must open our eyes and believe these, if we would have spiritual consolation. A believing view of the scriptures will enable us to exclaim, "They that be with us," &c. He has,

2. *Promised us his Holy Spirit.* By the Spirit we shall be instructed in the warfare, &c. Equipped for the conflict. It is thus written, "When the enemy shall come," &c. Now this must be believed and personally realized, and then we shall exclaim, "They that be with us," &c. He has,

3. *Given us striking examples of delivering goodness.* Look at Jacob fearing the wrath of Esau—look at the Israelites in the wilderness—look at David exposed to the envy of Saul—look at Daniel, &c.—look at Peter in prison, &c. What do these things teach, but the same truth, "They that be with us," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *The Christian life is a warfare.*
2. *God is the strong tower and refuge of his saints.*
3. *Faith in him will render us invincible.*

DAVID'S DISTRESS AND CONSOLATION.

"And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."—1 Samuel xxx. 6.

In reading the text, a variety of scripture passages are forced upon our remembrance: "Man that is born of a woman," &c. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," &c. "It is through much tribulation," &c. Many of David's psalms come to us bedewed with the tears which were shed when they were composed. The history of our text shall be the introduction. At a time of difficulty, David fled into the land of the Philistines, and dwelt with Achish, king of Gath; the king gave David Ziklag for his abode; a war broke out between the Israelites and the Philistines, and Achish

sought David to aid him in the warfare. Here were two extreme difficulties: he must fight for his benefactor, and against his country—or for his country, and against his benefactor. In either case, gratitude or piety would have been sacrificed. The lords of the Philistines, however, jealous of him, refused him as their ally; therefore, he returned back. But mark the scene he beheld, when he reached his residence, verse 1, &c. Let us consider,

I. DAVID'S GREAT DISTRESS.

II. THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF HIS ENCOURAGEMENT.

I. DAVID'S GREAT DISTRESS. Look at several particulars:—

1. *It was a severe domestic calamity.* Their city burnt—property perishing—but chiefly the captivity of their wives and children, taken by a rude, violent, lawless soldiery; exposed to suffering, violation—probably death. The absence of our friends is often a sore trial; their afflictions exceedingly painful; their death one of the severest strokes of providence; but, I ask, would not death be preferred to such a captivity as we have described? How exposed we are to relative afflictions! In proportion to the extent of that relationship, they are so many channels of grief; in proportion to our tenderest regards there is the possibility of the greater anguish and deeper sorrow. The loss of a Joseph—of a Rachel—of a friend like Jonathan—of an only son, &c.—of a beloved brother; but here, by one fell swoop of adversity, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were seized by an ungodly and excited army.

2. *It was a sudden and an unexpected calamity.* Sometimes we have premonitions and signs of coming sorrow; then there is time to prepare, to anticipate, and to fortify the mind by serious and pious contemplation; but this was sudden and unexpected. He was returning to his home, and expecting to find his habitation in peace; expecting a hearty welcome, a kind reception; especially to enjoy the sweet and tender reciprocation of domestic affection. But, alas! how blighted were his hopes—how sorrowful his countenance—how overwhelmed his spirit. A city in ashes—dwellings in ruin—beloved friends borne into captivity. What could exceed the shock? what embitter such a cup? what deepen such a trial? You do not wonder at David's distress. View him as a man—as a husband—as a father—as a child of God. His distress was natural, in accordance with true piety, and with the most generous feelings of kindness and benevolence. Hence observe,

3. *The immediate effect of this calamity;* verse 4. Their grief was loud; it vented itself in wailings, &c.; it flowed in tears; it exhausted the physical strength; they could weep no more. Ah! cries and tears are the resource of nature, which, if blocked up, would often produce the sullenness of deep melancholy, the ravings of phrensy, or the instant disembodiment of the spirit. Tears, and cries, and groans, are the natural results of sorrow, affliction, and distress. Happy when it does not become the sorrow that worketh death. We turn from the distress,

II. TO THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF HIS ENCOURAGEMENT. Observe,

1. *The great object of his encouragement and comfort.* God; the Lord God; the ruling Jehovah of the universe. He went at once to the Great Supreme. A link in the chain of providence seemed to burn with calamity. He went upward to the Being in whose hand was the whole chain. To whom could he so well refer as to the God whose presence is everywhere—whose eyes observe all—whose power is above all—whose righteousness regulates all—and whose resources include all things in the immaterial or material parts of the universe? But observe,

2. *The interest he personally had in that great object.* One word here of infinite value. "His God." See you not the difference between the God, or their God, and my God. Look at the beautiful address, Psalm lxiii. 1:—

> "The God that rules on high,
> And thunders when he please;
> That rides upon the stormy sky,
> And manages the seas:
> This awful God is ours,
> Our Father, and our Love," &c.

3. *The grounds of his encouragement and confidence in God.* I need not say more of the perfections of God, or his relationship, &c.; but we may add to these,

(1.) *His government.* He knew that all things and events were under God's control, and that he was a wise, just, and good God. "Though clouds," &c.; though ob-

scure, or dark, &c., yet always right. He knew that none could seize the reins, or prevent the rule of Jehovah, or defeat his designs.

(2.) *His especial and particular providence.* That this government especially had respect to the righteous. If he cared for the grass, &c.—for the lions—for the ravens—and for sparrows, then still more so for his people—"The very hairs of their head," &c. "The Father knoweth that ye have need," &c. Objects of especial love, and divine delight.

(3.) *In his gracious declarations.* Look at the figures he has chosen. Walls of Jerusalem; shield; tower; refuge; pavilion, &c. Father's paternal care; mother's tender love; an unchanging friend, &c.

(4.) *In his great and precious promises.* None of these speak of exemption from trouble, but support in it—deliverance from it—sanctification of it—happy influence, and glorious issue out of it.

(5.) *In his past experience of God's love.* God had done great things for him. Read the preceding portions of his history; the events of his life. He is now called to review this, and then he encouraged himself in the Lord, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *We may have distresses similar to David's.* Why and wherefore, if it be the will of God, should we be exempt?

2. *We may have David's consolations.* David's hopes were not blighted. He sought to know the will of God; he adopted means, and regained his family and his friends. Therefore,

3. *There is never any need for despair.*

4. *How wretched they who have deep trials, and no religion!*

DAVID AND HIS HOST IN THE CAVE OF ADULLAM.

"And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them."—1 SAMUEL xxii. 2.

OUR text relates to a literal incident in the life of David. From fear of Saul, he had taken refuge in the cave of Adullam, and here he was joined by those of his own family, and his father's house. Here, too, he collected together a small army, and our text describes the character of those who fled to his standard, "And every one that was in distress," &c. We design to apply the subject, by way of accommodation, to one greater than David, even to David's Lord, and to those who became soldiers under the Captain of Salvation. Notice,

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THOSE WHO GATHERED THEMSELVES UNTO DAVID. And,

II. WHAT HE BECAME UNTO THEM.

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THOSE WHO GATHERED THEMSELVES UNTO DAVID. "And every one," &c. Now, this description will particularly apply to those who, sensible of their misery, come to Jesus Christ for life and salvation. We apply the passage to the awakened conscious sinner, who is bowed down by penitency at the foot of the cross. Observe, they were such,

1. *As were in distress.* There is such a thing as worldly distress, and worldly sorrow; these often work death—drive to distraction—involve in ruin. There is distress arising from bereavements, &c.—Thus David, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan," &c.; Rachel weeping, &c. Distress arising from bodily affliction: wearisome days, sleepless nights, &c., severe pain, &c.; but the distress of the penitent arises from none of these sources. It is distress of soul for sin; distress, like the psalmist's, when he discovered himself in the horrible pit, &c.; like the publican's; like the prodigal's, "I have sinned against heaven," &c.; godly sorrow for sin, &c. Observe,

2. *They were such as were in debt.* Or, as it may read, every one that had a creditor. Now, every sinner is a debtor to the justice of God. We were bound to serve and obey, and we have all trespassed. From the goodness of God, we have received unnumbered blessings, and have not returned, &c.; the mercy and forbearance of God, we have not improved, &c. Our debt is great, immense, overwhelming, what we can never pay. Observe,

3. *They were discontented.* In the margin we have a better rendering, "Bitter of soul." This would arise from their reflecting on their debt and distress. Were destitute of enjoyment; almost overwhelmed; anxious for deliverance; in a state of desperation. Now, the awakened sinner

feels thus. He is bitter of spirit; his heart is sad; his condition deplorable; darkness surrounds him; he is filled with anxiety, "What shall I do to be saved?" &c., weary and heavy laden, he intensely longs for rest; he groans for freedom, &c. Now, it is said that they gathered themselves to David.

(1.) They had evidently heard of him, and where he was; so have those who are awakened, &c. You have read of Christ, and heard of Christ, and the tidings have been such as to interest you.

(2.) They know their condition could not be worse. Now this is generally felt by those who seek the Lord; they are perishing of hunger; a change must be rather favorable than otherwise.

(3.) They therefore hoped, and gathered themselves unto him; they ventured, and came to him; they had thought, reflected, considered, resolved, and now they act. So it is with the anxious soul; prayer is poured out, hope is cherished, faith exercised; the hand is stretched out, and laid on the head of the sacrifice:—

"'Tis just the sentence should take place;
'Tis just; but, oh! thy Son hath died."

(4.) Observe the subjection which is expressed, "They gathered themselves unto him," that he might be "over them." Were subject to him. It is thus only we can come acceptably to Jesus; it is thus only Christ will receive us. We must be under his authority and laws As the disciple is under his teacher; as the subject is under the sovereign; as the patient is under the physician; as the child is under the parent, we must yield ourselves to the Lord, &c. Notice,

II. WHAT HE BECAME UNTO THEM. "He became a captain over them." That is, their head, leader, and commander; he undertook their cause. All the ideas included in the similitude of captain, are amply sufficient for a discourse; we shall, therefore, notice the happy results arising from gathering ourselves under Christ, and Christ becoming a Captain over us.

1. *He delivers from distress.* The weary and heavy-laden find rest; the prodigal finds a home; the traveller, a refuge; the friendless, a friend; the poor, the bread of life.

2. *He discharges our debt.* Insolvent; nothing to pay; owing more than ten thousand talents; yet when we come to him trembling for the consequences, he says, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." He frankly forgives all; he is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, &c.

3. *He gives true content, peace of soul.* He takes away the cup of bitterness; he takes away the gall and the wormwood; he takes the restlessness and anxiety away, and says, "Peace I give unto thee, my peace I leave with thee," &c. He implants that kingdom in the heart, which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, joy, &c. Let us inquire, Have you gathered yourselves to Christ?

1. *Some of you have.* Then our subject is one of happy experience. Cleave to Christ; honor and extol him.

2. *Some of you are doing so.* Be determined; be prompt; venture on him, &c.

3. *Some have not decided.* Unto whom will you go? or how will you bear the distress, the debt, the bitter spirit? Oh! think, consider, repent, &c., and do it now.

MEPHIBOSHETH.

"And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet."—2 SAMUEL ix. 3.

NOTHING is more calculated to give us just views of the things of time, than seriously contemplating the movements of the providence of God. Just views of divine providence would make us sober, serious, prayerful, and contented. We often live for years without at all thinking of the way in which the Lord our God hath led us. This is both unwise and unprofitable. The word of God contains many striking exhibitions of the wonders of providence, both in the history of nations and individuals. The history of the people of Israel is one vast chain of connected wonders. Their formation, their rise, their glory, their decline, their dispersion, and yet their preservation, furnish ample materials for meditation and astonishment. How interesting in this respect is the history of David! What a life of joy and sorrow, honor and humiliation, good and evil! In his life there are some of the finest displays of real goodness and tender feeling the word of God

contains. An instance of this sort is contained in the narrative connected with the text. Let us glance at the more prominent things which it contains.

I. OBSERVE THE MUTABILITY OF WORLDLY GREATNESS. About thirty-four years before this, you will witness the appointment of Saul as the first king of Israel. Many things of the most flattering kind connected with him. His majestic appearance; his sacred anointing; his possession of another spirit from God. He had a rich kingdom, a powerful army, and a numerous family; but what changes have transpired! He apostatizes from God; he becomes a curse to the people; his life is laden with trouble, his heart tortured with envy, until he becomes the victim of despondency, and finally, he expires by his own hand; his numerous family are scattered; and in a few years only one individual of the royal race of Saul is to be found. Let it teach us the evanescence of earthly things; how uncertain is worldly glory and grandeur!

II. OBSERVE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE FAVOR AND BLESSING OF GOD. And here we must contrast David with Saul; and if you look back to his history, you find him dwelling with his father in rural life—a shepherd; but God brings him out of obscurity—gives him a noble spirit—introduces him to the court as he who had slain the impious Goliath. The same care follows his steps, delivers his life often from jeopardy, and finally places him on the throne of Israel. Who does not see the providence of God in all this? It could not have been, had not God been with him. "God's blessing maketh rich," &c.; his favor is better than life. Observe,

III. THE EXHIBITION OF A TRULY MAGNANIMOUS SPIRIT IN DAVID TOWARDS THE HOUSE OF HIS BITTEREST ENEMY. "Is there any yet?" &c. For what purpose? That I may erase them from the earth? that I may sit secure on my throne? that I may revenge the unrelenting malignity of Saul, their father? Oh, no; but that I may show him kindness. This is true magnanimity, real greatness. It has been said, to do good to those who love us is natural; to do evil to those who do us good is devilish; but to do good to those who do us evil is godlike. It is imitating Him who "causeth his sun to shine," &c.; it is imitating the blessed Redeemer, who died for his enemies, and who employed his dying breath in praying for his murderers, 'Father, forgive them," &c. Oh! how hard a lesson, but how necessary! "Love your enemies," &c. "Bless them that curse," &c. "For, if ye forgive not," &c.

IV. WE SEE A STRIKING INSTANCE OF GENUINE AND DISINTERESTED FRIENDSHIP. Friendship is the affection of kindred hearts and minds. It never existed in greater purity and ardor than between David and Jonathan. Who can read the ode composed by David on Jonathan's death, and not be affected: "How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Oh, Jonathan! thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women," 2 Sam. i. 25, 27. Now, this friendship did not die with Jonathan; see verse 1. And here the son of Jonathan is brought under the monarch's notice, &c. This reminds us of the dealings of God with sinners. God is graciously disposed to us through the merit of Jesus. It is the language of divine benevolence, &c.; it reminds us of what Christ expects from us. We profess to be his friends. If so, what would we not do for Christ? How we would honor him, clothe him, entertain him, &c. This we cannot do; but we have his friends all around us—his children; and he says, "Whosoever giveth a cup of cold water," &c. "As much as ye do it," &c.

V. WE SEE A REMARKABLE INTERPOSITION OF PROVIDENCE ON BEHALF OF THE FATHERLESS AND AFFLICTED. In the first instance, God had provided this afflicted child with a friend in Machir, verse 4; and now he is received into the palace of David.

APPLICATION.

Observe,

1. *The reward of pious benevolence to the seed of the godly.* Jonathan had been David's friend in the day of adversity, and God blesses and befriends Jonathan's son through the medium of the same David. God will not forget pious benevolence and liberality.

2. *The advantage of pious ancestors.* There was nothing in Mephibosheth to call for all this; but there was in his father Jonathan. Who can tell what blessings we inherit through the influence of our godly predecessors? see Psalm ciii. 17; Prov. xiii. 22.

3. *We are reminded of the rich provision of the gospel for the humble, penitent sinner;* verse 7, to the end. A sense of unworthiness, and a believing reception of the message of grace, will ensure to us all the blessings of life and salvation.

DAVID AND HIS FAMILY.

A SKETCH FOR HEADS OF FAMILIES.

"And David returned to bless his household."—2 SAMUEL vi. 20.

OUR subject is to heads of families a subject of great importance on very many accounts. The family is composed of distinct individuals, each having their own responsibility—parents, children, servants, masters, &c. The family (I mean the Christian family) is connected with the church of Jesus Christ—indeed ought to be a church in miniature. The family is also connected with the world; and the influence of every family is for the good or evil of mankind in general. True religion qualifies man for every sphere. It makes him first a good man; then a good relative character; a good citizen; and a blessing to the world. The example in the text is one of very great interest in reference to our subject. David had been very piously and actively engaged during the day; he had brought the ark of the Lord into the city of David; he had been filled with the spirit of holy joy and exultation; and then he concludes the whole by returning to bless his household. We inquire, then,

I. IN WHAT WE MAY BLESS OUR HOUSEHOLD. We cannot bless the members of our families with saving grace; we cannot convince, convert, or sanctify them; but we can use those means which under God are most likely to be efficient in obtaining these all-important results.

1. *We must establish family order and discipline.* And nothing can be really well done without these. The merchant adopts a system of order; the student the same. The gardener does not throw his seeds at random, or leave his ground open and exposed, without fence, &c. Every family should be regulated by the laws of order, and be under wise arrangement; each should know their place, and keep it. In some families, children rule; in others, servants; and in many, there is no rule at all. To extract comfort from such dwellings would be a miracle indeed; besides, it is the greatest mischief to the individuals themselves. They become spoiled and ruined, unfit for society, and often pests to the world. Not much good can be done without order, and to this, discipline must be added. Tempers, dispositions, and actions must be brought under restraint, and, if needs be, punished. How many are ruined through indulgence! I do not plead for the instant use of physical correction, but for the due use of authority, and parental restraint. Eli's sin was, "his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

2. *We must set up domestic worship, and regularly maintain it.* God has declared that his curse rests on the families who call not on his name. Joshua said, "As for me," &c. So "David returned," &c. Family worship should include reading the scriptures, prayer, and praise; it should be regular; should include the whole family; be simple, and short. Singing will generally make it attractive to the younger branches.

3. *We must exhibit before our families the spirit and practice of the gospel.* Nothing will give a more utter distaste to religion, than direct contradiction between our profession and lives. Proud followers of an humble Saviour! passionate, covetous, unjust, want of truth and fidelity. Our example must lead the way; we must take them with us, &c.

4. *We must present for our families earnest and affectionate prayer.* Seek God's blessing to succeed our labors. Surely we shall feel it both a duty and delight to pray fervently for our households. If we are called to pray for all men, how much more for our own families!

5. *We must provide for our own families the means of religious instruction and public worship.* We must lead them to the house of God; instil into them habits of reverence for divine things; ascertain that they know the essentials; converse with them; place religious books within their reach, &c. Let us notice,

II. SOME THINGS ESSENTIAL TO THE DISCHARGE OF THESE DUTIES.

1. *There must be unanimity in the heads of families.* Not two heads; not one correcting, and the other indulging. Father and mother must act in unison, both having

the same object. Children must not be trained to fear one and love the other. How many have been ruined thus!

2. *We must possess much wisdom and self-control.* Time, place, and circumstances, all to be considered. Provoke not your children. Masters must not be overbearing, &c. If we are violent and unreasonable, our families will dread and dislike us.

3. *We must seek the assistance of God's grace.* Our work is difficult and arduous, and we are short-sighted, feeble, &c. God alone, the head of all families, can well direct and qualify. Observe,

III. SEVERAL MOTIVES BY WHICH THIS COURSE MAY BE ENFORCED.

1. *We appeal to human affection.* Surely this should include the mind and soul; the intellectual and deathless spirit; their moral and their eternal condition.

2. *We appeal to our responsibility.* This is our duty. Who shall do it, if we do not? What will be our reply at the last day?

3. *We appeal to our own mercies.* God, our heavenly Father, how he instructs, counsels, and blesses us. So many of us owe much to our earthly parents.

4. *We argue from the advantages which may result.* To see our children wise, respectable, and pious; ornaments to the world; members of the church, &c. If it fails, our conscience will not upbraid us; we may boldly face them at the last day.

APPLICATION.

1. *What say you, Christian parents?* What plea do you present? Do you object for,

(1.) Want of time.

(2.) Want of ability.

(3.) Want of hope. We reply,

2. *Can time be better spent?* God will give you ability. Duty is yours.

3. *We shall meet our families at the last day.*

DAVID'S ADDRESS TO SOLOMON.

A SKETCH FOR THE YOUNG.

"And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers," &c.—1 CHRONICLES xxviii. 9.

THIS was David's advice to Solomon. A monarch's advice to his successor; a parent's advice to his son; and a godly man's advice to his posterity. Who can read it, and not admire the sentiments it contains? who can meditate on it, and not feel its supreme importance? It inculcates religion, that one thing needful; it urges it on the attention of youth, when it is so eminently beautiful and useful; it enforces the advice by a promise the most interesting, that God will be found of those who seek him; and it concludes the lesson by an admonition the most solemn, if we forsake God he will cast us off forever. Consider, my young friends,

I. THE ADVICE AND COUNSEL THE TEXT IMPARTS. This advice refers to two things:—

1. *To the knowledge of God.* "Know thou." Now, in a knowledge of God,

(1.) *There must be the admission of his being.* "He that cometh," &c. The existence of the supreme Creator and Ruler of the universe is a sentiment almost universally entertained by civilized men; only a very few who say "There is no God," and they rather speak the sentiments of their hearts, than the conclusions of their minds. If you have doubts here, just think of the great difficulties which these doubts create. A universe originally from nothing; a world without a maker; order, beauty, arrangement, all the offspring of chance. I will not dwell on this, satisfied that you heartily and fully admit the existence of one great and blessed Deity. In the knowledge of God,

(2.) *There must be a right apprehension of his character.* What is he? A Spirit—an eternal, unchangeable Spirit; a Spirit filling all things, knowing all things, governing all things; a Being glorious, almighty, infinitely wise, unboundedly good, yet righteous and pure; in reference to our world, a God of mercy; full of compassion, &c.

(3.) *There must be a clear conception of his will.* What does he hate? Sin. What does he love? Holiness. Go through the list of sins, and it extends to all sin; go over the whole of the graces and virtues, and his love extends to each and all. But that we may not err, we have his mind revealed. He has written his statutes, and hear what a giant spirit says of it: "All scripture," &c. 2 Tim. iii. 16. An attentive regard to this book is indispensable to a true knowledge of God. In this sublime mirror we behold him in all his glory. The true knowledge of God includes,

(4.) *An experimental consciousness of his favor.* To know how we stand in reference to God, and God in reference to us; to seek the assurance of his love to us. If we have not repented and sought mercy, nor believed in Christ Jesus, then our state is that of enemies—carnal—under his displeasure—exposed to his wrath; his face is set against such, &c. "He is angry with the wicked every day." But to know that we have seen and felt the evil of sin; loathed, forsaken, and repented of it; prayed for, and found pardon; to have a good conscience, one made so by the blood of sprinkling; to enjoy the Holy Spirit, &c. Observe, this knowledge of God is connected in the text,

2. *With obedience to him.* "And serve him." Take his yoke upon us; engage ourselves to him, by the consecration of all we are and have; give ourselves to God; to obey him, and hearken to his voice in all things. This service,

(1.) *Must be sincere.* "With a perfect heart." That is, with a whole heart; not divided, not feignedly, nor formally, but in uprightness, and truth, and in reality. Neither must our obedience be circumscribed by our opinions, or feelings, but have respect to all his commandments and statutes. This service,

(2.) *Must be free and voluntary.* "With a willing mind." Cheerfully; with readiness and delight. The renewed man can say, "I delight to do thy will, O God!" The good man delighteth in the law of the Lord. That which is not done willingly has no real virtue in it; nor will God accept the service of terror or superstition. I add, that this knowledge or service of God must be followed by,

3. *A constant seeking of God.* "If thou seek him," &c. A good man has often occasion to seek God.

(1.) He seeks his grace in the exercise of believing devotion.

(2.) He seeks his guidance through all the perplexities of life.

(3.) He seeks his preserving protection from his numerous adversaries.

(4.) He seeks his counsel in all his engagements; acknowledges him in all his ways, &c. And,

(5.) He seeks fellowship with God. Enoch, it is said, "walked with God," &c. David said, "I will walk before the Lord," &c. Observe,

II. THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THIS COURSE IS ENFORCED. The

1st. *Is addressed to our hope.* "He will be found of us." Now, this is a great scriptural truth. God will be found of all who seek him as he has directed; he will reject none; but to the young there is an especial promise, "They that seek me early shall find me." Youthful piety is peculiarly acceptable; and in finding God, we find all the soul's chief good and portion, light, joy, and salvation; peace, rest, and consolation; providential direction and safety; the blessings of time, and glories of eternity. In God is dignity, enjoyment, riches, blessedness. "All other things shall be added," &c. "Godliness is profitable," &c. The other motive,

2. *Is addressed to our fears.* "But if thou forsake him," &c. Live without him; neglect his words and ordinances, &c.; he will cast us off.

(1.) He casts men off from his gracious restraints; and how fearful they become! given up to all sin; run headlong into vice, &c.; given up to a rebellious mind.

(2.) He casts men off from his providential solicitudes; withdraws his paternal regards; allows them to reap as they have sown; then want, rage, shame, reproach, disease, and often premature death, is the result.

(3.) He casts the incorrigible into hell. "The wicked shall be turned into hell," &c. "The wicked are driven away," &c. Now, such are the motives. In applying this subject,

1. *Let me suggest a few things to those young persons who have obeyed the voice of the text.*

(1.) Entertain lowly views of yourselves

(2.) Cherish the fear of God daily.

(3.) Remember that personal, practical godliness must be always sought. Cherish a spirit of intense devotion.

(4.) Cleave to your Bible, "Whereby shall a young man cleanse," &c.

(5.) Be watchful in an eminent degree.

2. *To those who are resolving to act upon the spirit of the text.*

(1.) Then carry out your resolutions this very night. Go to your chambers, and prostrate yourselves before God.

(2.) Avoid your evil companions, though they may not be profligates, &c., yet if they are neglecters of religion.

(3.) Seek the society of the pious, &c.

"He that walks with wise men," &c. "I will be the companion of them that fear God," &c.

3. *To those who care for none of these things.* You have been instructed, admonished, warned, invited. Now, the responsibility is your own; to God you must give an account.

JEHOVAH DWELLING ON EARTH.

(A CHAPEL-OPENING SKETCH.)

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth?"—1 KINGS viii. 27.

THE text is connected with the dedication of Solomon's temple. The whole description is solemn, impressive, and magnificent. A moveable tabernacle was now superseded by one of the most splendid erections on which the sun of heaven ever shone. In the vastness of its dimensions, in the costliness of its materials, and in the resplendent appearance of the whole, it so far exceeded all previous erections, as to be worthy of its great design—a temple for the living and eternal God. Three circumstances worthy of notice were connected with its history: God himself was its artificer; it was erected according to the plan which Infinite Wisdom directed; it was the result of the voluntary free-will offerings of the Jewish nation, from Solomon on the throne to the peasantry of the people; it was dedicated to God by the fervent prayers and thanksgivings of the people, through Solomon, their king. How truly grand and affecting was that dedication! The king takes the lead in the services. Then Solomon assembled the elders of the people—the priests and Levites in their sacerdotal vestments, in connection with the chief of the men of Israel, form the august and memorable convocation. Solomon then, standing before the altar, stretches forth his hands, and lifting his eyes towards heaven, thus addresses the infinite Majesty of heaven and earth, verse 23. The text is a kind of parenthetical exclamation; a solemn pause in the midst of his supplications, "But will God?" &c.

I. LET US EXAMINE THE VARIOUS TERMS WHICH THE TEXT CONTAINS.

II. GIVE A SCRIPTURAL SOLUTION OF THE QUESTION PROPOSED.

I. LET US EXAMINE THE VARIOUS TERMS OF WHICH THE TEXT IS COMPOSED. The text refers to the divine Being dwelling on the earth.

1. *Let the earth be the first subject of our consideration.* The earth is represented as the footstool of Deity. It was originally given to the children of men; it forms a beautiful part of the divine dominions, and is full of the goodness of the Lord; it bears evident marks of the footsteps of Deity; worthy of its great Artificer; the scene of the divine wonders and glory. But through the entrance of sin, it has been spoiled and cursed. Eden has been converted into a desert; paradise into a howling wilderness; now the seat of Satan; the usurper has seized upon it, as though it was his rightful dominion. It is the Egypt of the hellish despot—the place of his cruel oppression—the scene of crime, and darkness, and wo; so that the earth is like one vast aceldama, or scene of horror and blood. It is the site of avowed enmity and rebellion against the Most High, and is in treasonable league with the powers of darkness. Well may we ask in reference to it, "Will God indeed dwell on the earth?" in a world so guilty, so polluted, so vile? Let us now consider,

2. *The glorious and blessed Being referred to in the text.* "Will God?" Think of his magnificent celestial dwelling; his imperial exalted palace; his sublime throne, exalted infinitely above seraphim and cherubim. It is well also to think of the extent of his dominions. Has he not worlds upon worlds, beyond number or calculation? Lift up your eyes on high. Behold the vastness and grandeur even of the solar system, compared with which our world is a mere speck, an atom! But reflect upon the starry worlds beyond the influence and attraction of our sun, which are most probably the suns and centres of other systems, scattered in the immensity of space, unexplored, and inexplicable to the inhabitants of our world. Well may we ask, "Will God?" &c.

3. *Now consider the word "dwell."* Will he "dwell?" We know he will observe; his omniscience beholds the whole of it at one glance, &c. Heaven, and earth, and hell are all open before him, &c. He will govern the earth, for he ruleth over all; his dominion is a universal dominion; he doeth according to his will, &c.; his presence will, and must pervade all space. "Whither shall we flee," &c. "But will he

well ?" &c. Make it his residence, his abode. Now lay the emphasis of the text,

4. *On the word "indeed."* Really, manifestly; in some certain, peculiar, especial sense. Shall its inhabitants know and discern his dwelling in their midst ? Such are the terms of which the text is composed. Well may we pause, and linger, and adore. Well ought we to pray that the Eternal Spirit would guide our minds in pursuing the solemn and momentous investigation ! Where shall our appeal be made ? To the ancient oracles of paganism ? They ask, "What God ?" &c. In the range of paganism there are innumerable deities, greater and minor: gods of the winds and of the waters; of the tempest and the calm; of the mountains and the valleys; but of the great, living, and eternal God, they are utterly ignorant. We appeal to the massive tomes of ancient philosophy, and there are profound research, subtle disquisitions, &c., innumerable conjectures; but we close these huge collections, satisfied that the world by wisdom knew not God. We ask the Deist—the votary of modern rationalism —and, instead of meeting the question with due seriousness, he treats the subject as visionary, and in place of a reply worthy of an intellectual being, you have the curled lip of scorn, the sneering look, and the vapid declaration that the great God is too much absorbed with his own perfections to care at all for this earth, or its puerile inhabitants. Let us, then,

II. Give a scriptural solution of the question proposed. Our subject convinces us of the necessity of a divine revelation; and to that revelation, then, our appeal must be made.

1. *God did dwell in the midst of his ancient Israel.* Not only had they occasional august manifestations of the divine glory, but he appeared for them in their redemption from the Egyptian yoke; guided and guarded, &c.; "In the pillar," &c.; but especially see this, Exod. xxix. 43, xl. 4. So also, when the temple was dedicated, 1 Kings viii. 10, 11; so also the Lord said, "Now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there forever, and mine eyes and my heart shall be there continually."

2. *God dwelt on the earth, in the glorious incarnation of his beloved Son.* It was to this the apostle referred, "We beheld his glory, the glory," &c. Jesus thus taught his disciples, "Whoso hath seen," &c. To this the apostle refers, "In Christ dwelt all the fulness," &c. This is the great mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh," &c. This was evidenced in his teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection. "He spake with the power and majesty of God." Diseases — sorrows — winds — the dead, obeyed. The devils, too, confessed and fled before him. No wonder, when the elements of nature obeyed him, that the people exclaimed, "What manner of man," &c.

3. *God dwells in his church, by the presence of his Spirit.* Deity, enrobed in flesh, hath ascended on high, even to the right hand, &c. But according to his promise, he sent down the Divine Spirit to dwell with his people, to the end of the world, John xiv. 16. Thus he dwelt miraculously on the apostles and first disciples, and thus he now dwells in his own spiritual church as the guide, the sanctifier, and the comforter of the saints. He it is who constitutes the vitality of the kingdom of Christ; he perfectly builds it up; he succeeds the efforts of his servants, giving testimony to the word of his grace, and enabling the devoutly pious to worship God in spirit and in truth.

4. *God graciously dwells in the heart of every believer.* How overwhelming that stupendous passage in Isaiah lxvi. 1, 2. How delightful the saying of Christ, "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," &c. "Hereby," says John, "we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us his Spirit." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, if so be God dwell in you ?"

5. *God will dwell on the earth, in the universal dominion which he has engaged to set up.* The earth is redeemed, and God has sworn that truth and righteousness shall again adorn it, so that it shall be one garden to the Lord. "That his knowledge shall cover the earth," &c. That his tabernacle shall be among men, and that he will dwell among them; that one song of triumph shall be heard from the rising to the setting of the sun, "Hallelujah ! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth ! Hallelujah ! for the kingdoms of this world," &c. Well may we exclaim, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *What an exhibition of the condescension and grace of God!* That he should hate, punish, destroy, &c., would be no marvel; but he loves, pities, descends; makes the earth the scene of mercy, long-suffering, and grace.

2. *How desirable that the presence of God should be secured and enjoyed in this church and congregation.* This will be its beauty, its exaltation, its establishment, its prosperity, and security. To secure this, the cross of Christ must be exalted. If Christ be honored, God will honor you. Let Christ be preached, and God will bless and succeed. To secure this, the Spirit must be constantly and fervently sought. House of prayer. He will give the plenitude of spiritual influence; like the copious rain or the early dews. He will cause showers of blessings to descend on his chosen hill. But to secure this, a peaceful atmosphere must be maintained. He is not the God of confusion, but of peace. This is his own element. Here the Dove will hover round you, and over you, &c.

3. *I ask another question.* Will men dwell with God in heaven? The place—heaven; God's palace, &c. Men, worthless, &c. Oh! yes; they shall come from the east, and the west, &c. Who? The believer; the faithful servants of Christ. Then forget not, but seek this better country.

A RECOGNITION OF PIOUS VOWS

"Thy vows are upon me, O God! I will render praises unto thee; for thou hast delivered my soul from death; wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?"—PSALM lvi. 12, 13.

MUCH is said in the scriptures of the Old Testament on the subject of vows. The earliest vow recorded, is that of Jacob in connection with the vision of Jehovah at Bethel. "If God be with me, and will keep me," &c., Gen. xxviii. 20. Hannah also vowed unto the Lord in reference to Samuel, resolving to dedicate the child to the Lord forever, 1 Samuel i. 21, 22. All of you remember the rash vow of Jephthah, and its sequel of unhappy results in reference to his daughter. It is said that the sailors of the vessel in which Jonah was endeavoring to escape, after they had thrown him into the sea, "offered a sacrifice, and made vows," Jonah i. 16. In several portions of the Psalms, the inspired and holy man of God refers to vows; thus he openeth one of his beautiful and sacred odes "Praise waiteth for thee, oh God, in Zion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed," Psalm lxv. 1. Again he says, "So will I sing praise unto thy name forever, that I may daily perform my vows," Psalm lxi. 8; but I confine the subject at the present to those who have vowed allegiance to the Lord, and are this evening intending to ratify that vow by commemorating the love of Jesus at his sacramental table; to you then who are now uniting yourselves to the people of God, our subject will be especially directed. We ask,

I. WHAT THE VOWS OF THE BELIEVING PENITENT SHOULD COMPRISE. Their vows should include,

1. *A resolution to forsake the service of Satan and sin.* To abandon and utterly forsake the way of transgression and death. To this we are often invited, exhorted, &c. Great promises made to such. The apostle refers to the believing Romans as having done so, Romans vi. 16, 17.

2. *A resolution to yield body, soul, and spirit to God.* The apostle says, "Yield yourselves to God"—"I beseech you, brethren," &c., Romans xii. 1. This is a reasonable service—a dignified service—a happy service; one which appeals to us from the cross. "Ye are not your own," &c. Christ must have heart, tongue, and life.

3. *To present constant homage, reverence, and supreme love to God.* God demands this, and it is our highest interest and felicity to yield it to him. The loftiest angels do this—his greatness, and glory, and power, claim our homage and reverence—his goodness and love, our supreme affection. God must have the heart—occupy the throne—sway the sceptre.

4. *To identify Christ's cause with our dearest interests.* Christ's cause must be sacred to those who love him. Apostles and confessors valued it more than worldly honor, riches, ease, liberty, or life. They toiled, and suffered, and died for it; now it ought to be as precious to us; and the resolve of the Christian convert should be, "If I forget thee, Jerusalem," &c. This must be continuous, daily, &c.

5. *Unfeigned attachment to God's church and people.* "Peace be within thy walls," &c. "For my brethren and companions' sake, I will now say," &c. Consecration to God must be followed by close and constant union to the followers of Christ. "They that believed were together," &c. Now, these feelings of attachment must be visible, distinct, and manifest; we are to do good unto all men, but "especially to the household of faith." Now, these vows are to be taken, and sustained and honored by the exemplification of the principles they involve. Notice,

II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THESE VOWS SHOULD BE MADE. In the joyful spirit of praise. "I will render praise unto thee," &c. Now here he affirms,

1. *What God had done for him.* "Delivered my soul from death." The soul in its unrenewed state is dead, "dead in trespasses and sins"—dead to God—dead to holiness, &c.—dead also judicially under the righteous sentence of eternal death; exposed to the wrath to come. Now from this death the soul is delivered—delivered meritoriously by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—he came to deliver from the wrath to come—delivered really by the gracious and merciful influences of the Spirit of God. When the sense of guilt and condemnation is taken away—when the Spirit testifies with our spirits that we are the children of God, &c. What a great and blessed deliverance this is. Now for this deliverance,

2. *He will cherish a thankful spirit.* "I will render praises," &c. Thus the prophet breaks forth, "O Lord, I will praise thee," &c. Now these praises are to include thanksgivings at all times, places, and occasions. "Praises" in the plural, so that the vows of God are to be honored by a spirit of holy, delightful praise—a spirit of cheerfulness and joy. We cannot be too ardent, intent, and frequent in the praises we render to the Lord; so to praise God, as never to allow the least feeling of self-righteous complacency to attach to ourselves. Notice,

III. THE PIOUS APPEAL HE MAKES TO GOD IN REFERENCE TO THE FUTURE. "Wilt not thou deliver my feet," &c. He recognises,

1. *Perils in his way.* Satan lays his snares in the pathway of the Christian. There are many worldly allurements, &c. Now we must remember this—not be forgetful, or careless, or presumptuous; not lean on our own strength; many have fallen—Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, Peter, &c.

2. *He trusts to God for security.* "Wilt not thou deliver," &c. Now in perplexity, seek counsel of your Christian friends, especially of your minister. Go to your Bible, and frequently to the closet of secret devotion; but after all trust only in God's delivering arm. "Hold thou me up," &c. Cherish a constant sense of this.

3. *He exhibits the prevailing desire of his soul.* "To walk before God," &c. Always to recognise God, to set the Lord before us—to act in all things, to please and glorify his name; and in this holy course to "walk," to make constant advances, to go "from strength to strength," &c. "One thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Perhaps most persons here have been vow-makers.* At one time or another you have resolved to give yourselves to God; perhaps in affliction—in severe trouble—in peril—in bereavements; but in general, how evanescent they have been! "Oh, Judah! what shall I do unto thee?" "Oh, Ephraim!" &c. "Unstable as water," &c.

2. *There are some here who have vowed, and kept their vows.* What a mercy! Let God be exalted. Render praises, &c. Especially you who are for the first time to be recognised as the followers of Christ. Oh, study the text, pray over it, &c.

3. *Who will now avow his resolve to give himself entirely to God?* Let this be the great crisis—the eventful turning point—the time when it shall be said, "Behold, he prayeth," &c.

HISTORY OF HEZEKIAH.

NO. I.—HIS MORAL CHARACTER.

"For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth."—2 KINGS xviii. 6, 7.

HEZEKIAH was one of the most pious kings of Judah. He lived in the fear of the Lord, and was jealous for Jehovah's glory. Pre

vious to his reign the people had greatly departed from the true God, and sunk into gross and wicked idolatries. See former chapter, v. ix. 11. Now, Hezekiah immediately set on foot an entire reformation. It is said of him, that "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." viii. 38; and then follows our text, "For he clave to the Lord," &c.

I. The pious course Hezekiah pursued. Now, this is expressed in the following particulars:

1. *His adherence to God.* "He clave unto the Lord." This implies union with the Lord. Oneness with him; attachment, preference, and decision. When Barnabas visited the disciples at Antioch, "he exhorted them to cleave unto the Lord," &c. It includes,

(1.) The judgment cleaving to the truth of God.

(2.) The will cleaving to the ways of God.

(3.) The affections fervently going out after God; loving and delighting in him.

(4.) The soul's trust and confidence implicitly resting upon him. Many things are opposed to this cleaving to the Lord. Satan tries to beguile us; world to fascinate our hearts; unbelief would be constantly turning aside from him; cleaving to the Lord requires the resolute determination of the soul to adhere to God under all these circumstances.

2. *He kept his commandments.* No acceptable religion without this. Knowledge, profession, attendance upon ordinances, all worthless without this. This is the evidence of our sincerity. Love to God will make his commandments pleasant and delightful. "This is the love of God," &c.

3. *He persevered in the way of holy obedience.* "And departed not," &c. Some ran well but were hindered. Impulse and excitement often prompt to a certain line of action, and then, when the novelty is over, they turn aside. Many are drawn aside by the pomps and vanities of the world; many by sordid love of gain; many by fear of man, or of suffering; Hezekiah held on his way and departed not, &c. This preservation is necessary—essential. The end must crown the whole. "He that endureth to the end," &c.

II. The distinguished blessings which he enjoyed. He was favored,

1. *With the divine presence.* "And the Lord was with him." This is a very comprehensive form of expression; it includes every desirable good; it is what God promised to Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 15. What Moses so earnestly prayed for. "If thy presence go not with us," &c. It is that which formed the great desire of David for his son Solomon, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. The presence of the Lord is the good man's safety. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." "A very present help," &c. The presence of the Lord is the good man's guide. He led Israel, and also all who trust in him by a right way, &c. It is his comfort. His presence makes our paradise, &c. He was favored,

2. *With continued prosperity.* "And he prospered," &c. It is said of another, "So long as he sought the Lord," &c. Now that is prosperity, when all things are tending to one great and glorious consummation; not because a man is getting rich, or elevated in the world; what are these, if they are in the way of sin and death? When the mind and heart are in a state of cultivation and improvement for another world, yet "godliness is profitable unto all things," &c. A pious man enjoys what he has, much or little. "Godliness with contentment is great gain," still greater with a brightening hope of immortality and unending life. Real prosperity is of God. His favor and smile are essential to it.

APPLICATION.

1. *How many are imitating the good Hezekiah?* cleaving, following, obeying God.

2. *What encouragement for all to do so!*

3. *Will not some commence to-day?*

HISTORY OF HEZEKIAH.

NO. II.—HIS SICKNESS.

"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, saying," &c. &c.—2 Kings xx. 1–6.

We previously referred you to the piety and persevering decision of Hezekiah. He effected a great national reformation; and he personally clave unto the Lord, and departed not from following the Lord, &c. It is said of him, that God prospered him

whithersoever he went forth. This world, however, is a state of mutability; here we ought not to calculate upon our temporal blessings as abiding. Like the agitated ocean is the sea of human life: there is nothing changeless, fixed, and certain. One of the sources of trouble to man, is the affliction of body to which he is liable. Sin has sown the seeds of disease and death in our mortal system, and pain and sickness are the necessary consequences. Our subject relates to the affliction of Hezekiah, and his gracious recovery from it. Observe,

I. THE SICKNESS WHICH HE ENDURED.

1. *The sickness itself.* The nature of Hezekiah's affliction is not stated, (supposed to be the plague,) it was evidently, however, severe and dangerous, ver. 1. He was confined to his bed. Now, in his visitation, observe,

(1.) Hezekiah was not exempted, although in the prime of life, in the very midst of his days, (he was now between thirty and forty years of age.) We do not wonder at helpless children and the infirm aged; but every period of life is alike vulnerable, &c.

(2.) His worldly elevation did not exempt him; he was a monarch, had his crown, sceptre, throne of state, retinue, &c.; all these are worthless as to the prevention or the removal of pain.

(3.) His eminent godliness did not exempt him. Afflictions come alike to all; piety enables us to bear them with patience—it sanctifies them, and obtains good out of them; but does not exempt, &c.

(4.) His extensive usefulness did not exempt him; he filled a most important station, and that well; he was a blessing of real worth and importance to the kingdom; yet he was sick even unto death. Observe,

2. *The intimation he had of its fatal termination.* The prophet Isaiah, &c., ver. 1. The message evidently meant this, Thy sickness is of a mortal kind, it must naturally prove fatal; such was its character and tendency. Notice,

3. *The direction given him.* "Set thine house in order," &c. This direction was a favorable sign as to Hezekiah's piety. He was a godly man, as such his state was secure; he had lived to the Lord, so was ready to die, &c.; but it was desirable that his household affairs should be arranged and fixed. This is of importance to all persons, especially to a king, and still more so to a king who had been extensively engaged in the service of God. Let me pause in the narrative to make a few observations.

(1.) Some persons neglect a proper settlement of their temporal concerns; and often family broils, litigation, and strife, &c., are the result.

(2.) Others do this, but neglect personal preparation for dying. They are exact, and prompt, and minute about property, &c., but they neglect their souls, are careless about religion and eternal things; or, perhaps, professedly leave it to the last. What folly and infatuation! surely the soul is the chief; eternity most momentous; heaven the most precious.

(3.) Others neglect both. They neither set themselves nor their houses in order. They will not entertain the subject. By turning their backs upon it, they persuade themselves the evil day is postponed.

(4.) The godly man does both. First he seeks the kingdom of God, &c. First regards the soul, and seeks for it a title and meetness for a better world; lays up a good foundation for the future; then he considers how he can render his riches and influence more useful to mankind after his decease, that being dead, his spirit and holy efforts may live after him; he will be anxious that his family, the church, and the institutions of mercy, may all flourish after his decease. As we cannot enter now on the other parts of the subject, we take four views of sickness of body to which all men are liable.

1. *The origin of all sickness is sin.* But for this our bodies would have been painless and invulnerable, the seat of abiding pleasure; such they were when they came from the hands of the great Artificer. Sin has undermined it, weakened it, and diffused through every fibre and pore the seeds of frailty and death.

2. *Most persons are called to bear it.* Few live to any great age without experiencing it. Most now present, many this day, &c. We ought rather to calculate upon it. No marvel that we are so, but the reverse.

"Our life contains a thousand springs,
And dies if one be gone;
Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long"

3. *In sickness we should recognise the hand of God.* Does not spring out of the dust. To the righteous, fatherly chastisement; to the wicked, often warning; admonitory to all; yet much sickness is from the manifest disregard which persons pay to the laws of nature. Health is a gift to be preserved, &c., valued, &c. How many are sick through transgression; many too through neglect; but all may derive good therefrom, by reflection and prayer.

4. *There will be no sickness in heaven.* World of health. No sickness or death, &c. "Sighing and sorrow shall forever flee away," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let health and life be improved, &c.*

2. *In all states, seek the favor of God.* "Glorify him with your bodies and souls," &c.

HISTORY OF HEZEKIAH.

NO. III.—HIS RECOVERY.

"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord," &c. —2 KINGS xx. 1–6.

WE formerly adverted to the sickness of Hezekiah and the message of Isaiah, concerning its fatal termination, "Set thine house in order," &c. We have now to observe the effects which this message produced; it was a very momentous one. Truly the most solemn which can be addressed to an immortal being. It was particularly so to Hezekiah in the meridian of life; in the midst of the great work in which both the glory of God and the well-being of the nation were concerned. The effects of this message were, "Hezekiah wept sore." He was in great trouble and distress of mind. It does not appear that this arose from immoderate love of life, or distressing fear of death, or from awful forebodings of the future. But,

(1.) There was doubtless the instinctive love of being. This is of God's own planting, worthy even of the pious. To be cherished, &c.

(2.) Love to the kingdom of Israel; no successor; national confusion.

(3.) Love to God's cause. The reformation scarcely finished; the blasphemers, the enemies of God, were now conspiring to overthrow. Such it appears were the reasons of Hezekiah's distress, worthy of him as a man and as a servant of God. Notice then as the leading division of the subject,

I. THE COURSE WHICH HEZEKIAH ADOPTED. He had recourse to prayer. Prayer is the remedy of the afflicted spirit. "If any man is afflicted, let him pray."

1. *His prayer was divine in its object.* He prayed to the Lord. How vain is every other refuge!

2. *It was direct and intimate.* "He turned his face to the wall." He shut out the world; withdrew from earth; sought immediate audience with Jehovah. What a sight! An afflicted mortal ascending to the throne of grace, with a petition for mercy; what a privilege to be allowed to do so. To be made welcome.

3. *It was fervent and earnest.* "I beseech thee," &c. His heart was poured out; his soul's earnest longings were presented. With tears he supplicated, &c.

4. *It was connected with reference to his own integrity.* Now this was not self-righteous. Not boasting. He did not plead it as a merit; he referred to his sincerity as a truth, &c. Not divided in his attachments, &c. He had enjoyed tokens of God's approbation; now this was all true—he could appeal to God, &c. We find Job referred to his previous life. Paul also, who felt himself less than the least of all saints, had to refer to his sufferings and labors in the cause of God; this is the privilege of the righteous, that they have constantly the rejoicing of a good conscience, &c.

5. *Yet it was evidently submissive to God's will.* His prayer is remarkable in this respect. He does not mention his life or recovery; he thought it best to pray in general terms, and left particulars with the Lord; no doubt his petition included restoration, yet it is clear he left it to the Lord. How wise and safe is this! Not our will, &c. Observe,

II. THE RECOVERY WHICH HE EXPERIENCED. The decree of mortality was reversed; his life was prolonged. In saving his life God referred,

1. *To the success of Hezekiah's prayer.* "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears," &c. God is the hearer and answerer of prayer. How potent, how almost almighty is prayer, &c. When praye.

has been fervently presented, it has stayed divine wrath. God exclaimed to Moses, "Let me alone," &c. It is right and desirable at all times. No case too extreme. Even when God said, "Thou shalt die," Hezekiah's prayer was successful. "Is any afflicted, let him pray." Hezekiah's recovery was connected,

2. *With the use of means*, verse 7. We cannot doubt the perilousness of the case without God's interposition. The disease was a fatal one, only God could stay it; but God is the author of means. In the use of wise and proper means we may expect God's blessing. Many of Christ's miracles were connected with means. Clay and spittle, &c.

3. *It was attested by a miraculous event.* Hezekiah seemed exceedingly anxious; death probably appeared at hand; hope had expired, and he sought of God a sign. Many cases of a similar kind, Gideon and the fleece, &c. This is always the sign of weak faith; nothing can be stronger than God's word. Deity might be justly offended; but he remembers our frame, &c. He does not break the bruised reed, &c. The sign is specified, verses 9, 10.

4. *His recovery was connected with other blessings.* God gave more than was asked, verse 6. Probably Hezekiah desired to live chiefly for these things. God anticipates and gives liberally, &c.

5. *His lengthened life was definitely stated.* "Fifteen years." To a man on the borders of death, fifteen years is a considerable period; but what in itself? look back upon the last fifteen you have spent. To know the precise time of death is not desirable; it is not best generally, but it was with Hezekiah. God's ways are not our ways, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let the subject teach us the mutability of earthly affairs.* We know not what a day, &c. Do not expect to live without sorrow and crosses; this is indeed a valley of tears.

2. *Let it teach how important an interest in God's favor is.* God is all-sufficient.

3. *How important to redeem our time.* "So teach us to number our days," &c. "Be ye therefore ready," &c.

HISTORY OF HEZEKIAH.

NO. IV.—HIS UNGRATEFULNESS.

"But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him."—2 CHRONICLES xxxii 25.

WE should not have been surprised if the text had been recorded of Cain, who with haughty self-complacency offered his sacrifice to God, but whose offering evidently had no respect to his own sinfulness or the provision of a Saviour; or if the text had been spoken of the murmuring Israelites, who were filled with discontent and murmuring despite of all the miracles which God wrought for them in the desert; but the text is spoken of Hezekiah, the good king Hezekiah, whose prayer obtained a long respite when the sentence of death had gone forth.

I. CONSIDER THE TEXT IN REFERENCE TO HEZEKIAH. Two inquiries will elucidate the first part of our subject.

1. *The benefits he had received.* We speak not now of the regular bounties of the divine providence and goodness; nor yet of the especial favors of God's grace. Two events had recently transpired; he had been sick, nigh unto death; the solemn mandate had been addressed to him, "Set thine house," &c. But God had heard his prayer, and, moved with compassion, had healed him, and added fifteen years to his life. What an interposition of mercy, &c. The powerful Assyrian monarch, with an army so numerous and powerful as to fill the Israelites with the utmost dismay, was at his gates. God sent his angel, and in one night 145,000 of the Assyrian army were slain. Without battle, without the aid of Hezekiah's army, &c. Now these were extraordinary acts of God's goodness and mercy. Surely they would elicit the most fervent gratitude and praise; yet it is said after all this that Hezekiah did not render, &c. We inquire then,

2. *In what way he did not render again.* We must see this as described, 2 Kings xx. 12. Hearing and witnessing the miracle which had been wrought, they came to visit the honored and distinguished monarch. In this he allowed his heart to be lifted up. With ostentation he showed them his riches, &c. He gave not God the glory of his great goodness, as he might have done, and ought to have done. Hezekiah, who removed the altars from the high

places, &c., yet allowed self for a time to reign. What reason the best have to fear their own hearts! The prophet is sent to proclaim his sin and the punishment it should produce, 2 Kings xx. 16. Hezekiah humbled himself and acknowledged the righteousness and goodness of God's administrations, 2 Kings xx. 19; 2 Chron. xxxii. 27. God's conduct towards Hezekiah in this matter is specified, verse 31. Hezekiah's heart was not perfect; lifted up, and God allowed him to lean upon it, that he might be conscious of it, and be delivered from it; like the nurse and the wayward child. Let us now consider the text,

II. In reference to ourselves. Three questions.

1. *What benefits have we received from the Lord?* How shall we describe or number them? Where shall we begin? With our temporal bounties; the good things of this life; food, raiment, dwellings, reason, health, mental enjoyments, religious privileges, sabbaths, sanctuaries, Bibles, ordinances. To the friends of Jesus, I just dwell on two points, for a few moments.

1. *Converting grace.* He has saved you from your natural lost estate. From sin and the power of Satan; from the wrath to come. Brought you into his kingdom, &c. Made you heirs of eternal life.

2. *Preserving mercy.* How great is his mercy towards them, &c. How often forgiven, sustained, blessed, &c. Kept you from the roaring lion; delivered you from innumerable perils, &c. We ask,

2. *What he has expected you to render unto him.*

(1.) Gratitude. Deep, hearty, constantly expressed and exemplified.

(2.) Supreme homage and glory. He did not design you to be lifted up, but rather humbled; he did not wish the glory to be given to his gifts, but to himself; he did not wish you to parade his blessings, but to enjoy them and use them to his glory.

(3.) Imitation of his mercy and goodness. "Be ye followers of God as dear children;" feel as God feels; "Be merciful as your Father," &c. Do good, &c. He has filled your cup to overflowing, but not to be hoarded, nor wasted, but to run in streams of benevolence among the poor and miserable of your fellow-creatures. God puts down all this as done to himself. "I was hungry, and ye fed me," &c. We ask,

3. *Who has not fallen into the sin of Hezekiah?* Not rendered according, &c. "Examine yourselves; prove your own selves," &c. Who is not guilty? He who is clear let him stand up and reproach Hezekiah. Have we not been deficient in gratitude, in humility, in doing good? Then let Hezekiah's repentance be ours. If we feel our guilt, let us confess it. Deplore and seek mercy; trust our hearts less, and seek God's grace more and more. But one word to the unconverted, who never feel grateful, but who have been eagerly sinning against God, against his mercy, his Son, his Spirit, his forbearance. Oh! think how wicked, how base, how ruinous it must be. "There is forgiveness," &c. Seek it now, and through Christ's merits alone.

THE CHAFF AND WHEAT CONTRASTED.

"What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord."—Jeremiah xxiii. 28.

Fidelity in any office is of the utmost importance. It is so in the confidential servant, or steward; it is so in the watchman; it is so in the physician; it is so most of all in the minister, or servant of God. He is a steward of Christ—a watchman on the walls of Zion. He is to direct the sin-sick to the great remedy; he stands forth to show unto men the way of salvation. In every age there have been faithless men who have usurped this office; men who have ministered for hire; who have sought their own profit; have taught for a morsel of bread. Such prophets existed in the time of Jeremiah. Men prophesied whom God had not sent; see verse 21. God affirms his omnipresence, verse 23; he describes the course they adopted, verse 25; then he shows how the true prophets ought to act, verse 28; and then follows the text.

I. We shall apply the text to the value and importance of the divine word, as our infallible directory in matters of religion. The word of God is indeed the wheat—the grain of life. It is that which he has given to be the food of the soul. As such, it is adapted to our state, sufficient for our necessities; able to save the soul. It never failed when re-

ceived with reverence, faith, and obedience. Now, every thing else presented to us for this purpose is chaff.

1. *What is reason in the place of the scriptures?* A telescope in the dark! With the light of truth, it is incalculably precious; without it, nothing at all. Go to the rude savage tribes, and they have it; to the cannibal hordes, and they have it.

2. *What is learning, or science, or philosophy, without the Bible?* Go to the learned, philosophic Egyptians, who worshipped 3000 animals and plants; go to the philosophical and scientific Grecians; see their works of art and science. Their painters and sculptors were chiefly employed in contributing to their idolatrous temples. Go now to the eastern world, where literature both of a metaphysical and poetical character has flourished for ages, and yet the people are without God and hope in the world. If reason or learning would lead men to God and his services, then piety would flourish in the higher classes of our land, &c.; but the reverse is the case. Beloved, there is one book of light, of legislation, of mercy; one book to guide you to a better world—it is, *the word of the Lord.*

II. We shall apply the text to the ordinances of God as contrasted with the institutions of men. *God's ordinances* are all founded in his own infinite skill and wisdom; they never can be improper and unmeaning, because they are God's. *God's ordinances* are clothed with authority; therefore they are obligatory and binding. *God's ordinances* are ever adapted to edify and do us real good; not merely ceremonial, but means of profit. A right observance will be productive of spiritual good to every servant of God. *God's ordinances* are all clearly revealed in this book. Nothing is so, if God has not spoken. A divine ordinance must have God's express command. All *human institutions* are chaff; light, profitless, &c. You may know all such by bringing them to the balances of the sanctuary—to the divine word. They may resemble the true, but they are chaff; may appear resplendent and attractive, yet chaff; be very popular, yet chaff; have the sanction of the learned, still chaff; regarded by many good men, after all only chaff. Wheat needs no garnishing, no painting, no addition. It is the staff of life, just as God sends it.

III. We apply the text to every thing which men may substitute for real religion. By real religion, we mean a conversion, a renewed heart, an obedient life, the love of God, &c.; having the spirit and mind of Christ. How many things persons try to substitute for these:—

1. *Self-righteousness.* A regard to our own supposed excellencies; a self-complacent trusting to ourselves. Now this, indeed, is chaff; a covering of filthy rags. The Pharisees boasted of this. Christ said, "Except your righteousness," &c.

2. *Religious profession.* Assuming the name, form, and the speech; saying, "Lord! Lord!" regular in attendance on the means, &c. Now, all this is right in itself, but it is not religion. "The kingdom of God is within," &c. "Ye must be born again." This in the place of piety is chaff, mere chaff.

3. *An exact regard to all the Lord's institutions.* We cannot urge this too forcibly; yet this is only the evidence, and not piety itself. We may depend on these, and look to these, instead of to Christ and his cross; we may be merely *ceremonial* Christians, without the life and spirit of Christ.

APPLICATION.

1. *We urge your attention to the spirit and practice which the divine word exhibits.* Study this as to information, experience, &c.

2. *Urge sinners to obtain the benefits of saving piety.* What are your pleasures? Chaff; nothing else. Thousands have proved them so in adversity, sickness, and death. Have not you? Then give your hearts to God; set your hearts and souls to seek the Lord, &c.

RESPONSIBILITY.

"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required."—Luke xii. 48.

Our subject is that of responsibility, a subject worthy of our very serious consideration. A right apprehension of this is very desirable; and a feeling sense of it pervading our minds would tend greatly to preserve us from the evils to which we are exposed. To the doctrine of responsibility there are no exceptions but those of idiocy and childhood. Every man of sane mind

is responsible, and the consequences involved are solemn and momentous. We ask,

I. FOR WHAT ARE WE RESPONSIBLE?

1. *For our existence.* The means of life are given to us, and we are bound to preserve our lives; not to expose them to unnecessary peril; not to neglect the use of those means by which the providence of God continues our being.

2. *For our natural faculties, and bodily health and vigor.* Every power of the mind was designed for some specific use and wise end: the understanding—the judgment—the memory—the affections, &c. Now, we are responsible for the right use and employment of these. So, also, bodily health is to be cherished, and all lawful solicitude to be exercised respecting it. "Do thyself no harm," is the voice of reason as well as revelation. Hence all persons who injure their bodies, impair their health, and affect their minds by gluttony and intemperance, will not be held guiltless before the Lord.

3. *For our natural and acquired talents.* One has a bright or penetrating genius; another, a discerning judgment; a third, an eloquent tongue; a fourth, a flaming intellect; a fifth, a vivid, fertile imagination. One has acquired extensive knowledge; others are familiar with tongues; while many are intimate with the wonders of nature, or the discoveries of art. For all these we are responsible.

4. *For our wealth.* Riches are only intrusted to men as talents to be laid out for the comfort of themselves, the good of society, and the glory of God. We are responsible as to the way of obtaining it; as to the love we have to it; and as to the manner in which we expend it.

5. *For our influence.* That is, power to affect others; and this is possessed more or less by every human being; the richest and the poorest; the most learned and the most illiterate; the monarch and the peasant; the youth and the sire. All possess the power of doing others good or evil.

6. *For our privileges.* How numerous are these! There is the light of revelation; the preaching of the gospel; the ordinances of religion; the throne of grace; the Christian sabbath; the communion of saints, &c.

7. *For our time.* Next to the blood of Jesus, the most precious blessing we possess. Our seed time; our period of probation; our only day of preparation for the scenes of a solemn eternity. Oh! when we think that on this short span hang everlasting results!

8. *For the activity of life, and all the good or evil we have crowded into it.* We ask,

II. TO WHOM WE ARE RESPONSIBLE? In some respects we are responsible to conscience, for the voice within demands attention; to an improvement of all our means and blessings; in some sense, also, to one another, according to our stations in life. Magistrates, and civil rulers, are responsible to the public for exercising righteous authority and rule; parents, for an affectionate and faithful discharge of their parental obligations; ministers to their people, for a full and faithful discharge of their ministerial and pastoral duties to their flocks; and thus, too, subjects are responsible to their rulers, children to their masters, and members to those who have the rule over them in the Lord. But we are responsible more especially to God as our Maker; as the bestower of all our blessings; as the Lord of conscience; and as our final judge. Every one must give an account of himself to God. We ask,

III. AS TO THE EXTENT OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY. This the text affirms will be proportionate. "Where much is given," &c., Now, this accords,

1. *With the eternal principles of equity and righteousness.* Where there is no talent, there is no responsibility; where there are few, the responsibility is according. "Where much is given," &c. From the intellectual more will be demanded than from the illiterate; from the rich more beneficence than from the poor; from professors, more than from the profane; from spiritual persons, more than from the world; from the aged, more than the young. This accords,

2. *With the unvarying testimony of the Holy Scriptures.* This is very clearly presented to us in the history of Cain and Abel; Gen. iv. 7; Ezek. xxxiii. 17; Rom. ii. 11, &c.

3. *With the representations of the judgment-day.* Christ is called the righteous judge, who will judge every man according to his works.

4. *Does not this accord with your conscientious impressions of what is right?* All

earthly legislators act on this principle; so all masters and parents; and every man feels that it is right and fitting, that "where much is given," &c.

APPLICATION.

We learn,

1. *That each man is accountable to God for himself, &c.* That is, our state and character. We cannot evade it or relinquish it.

2. *That the responsibility of some is much greater than that of others.* What a weight of responsibility rests upon some present!

3. *We should seek to know how much God expects from us.*

4. *Faith in Christ will alone give us the ability necessary to a faithful discharge of the duties, &c., of life, and enable us to stand accepted in the last day.* We must win Christ, and be found in him, &c. "The just shall live by faith," &c.

5. *Unfaithfulness will involve in eternal sorrows.*

OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men."—Acts v. 29.

The apostles had been thrust into prison for obedience to their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. God, however, had sent an angel and delivered them from prison, and had directed them to go forth into the temple, and speak the words of life to the people. In the morning, when they should have appeared before the council, it was discovered, that instead of being in confinement, they were again publishing in the temple the gospel of Jesus Christ. From thence they were brought to answer for their conduct, when the high priest said, 'Did not we straitly?" &c. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, "We must obey God," &c. The subject is clearly the obligation of supreme obedience to God. Consider,

I. The nature of true obedience to God. Now, it is obvious that true obedience must,

1. *Be divine in its rule.* Obedience supposes laws—laws published, recognised, and enforced with due authority. Now, here must be a rule for Christian obedience. It is not a vague thing—a matter left to fancy or feeling. This rule is the word of God. The Holy Scriptures contain the mind of God; they are full, clear, and sufficient. It comprises all that is necessary for present godliness, and for our eternal salvation. True obedience,

2. *Must be universal in its regards.* It must respect all that the Lord hath spoken. If we select a part, so may others, &c.; thus every commandment of God would be made null and void. All the requirements of God are the emanations of infinite wisdom, holiness, and love. Take the statute-book of any kingdom: a man is not a loyal and good subject, who obeys a few of the laws, and violates the rest. Apply it to forgery, theft, murder; see James ii. 10. Now, the laws of God are of two kinds—*moral requirements* and *positive institutions.* The moral requirements are found in the ten commandments, and illustrated in Christ's sermon on the mount; positive institutions were numerous under the law, they are few and simple under the gospel. Now of these, the Lord's supper and baptism are the chief. Both of these are expressly enjoined; they stand prominently in the statute-book of Zion. You would have to erase the gospels, the Acts, and the epistles, before you could erase them. Now, it is often clear that persons who would shudder to violate the moral, yet with the greatest indifference neglect the positive institutions. We ask, in both cases is not the authority the same? Has not God manifested his severest wrath against those who have violated or neglected his positive institutions? This was the sin of our *first parents;* this was the sin of *Lot's wife;* this was the sin of Uzziah, who invaded the priest's office, and was smitten with leprosy, &c. 2 Chron. xxvi. 16, &c. Unquestionably obedience is the duty of all who profess to be the loyal servants of God.

3. *It must be affectionate and sincere.* Obedience of the affections; from love and not terror; to please God more than escape his wrath. "This is the love of God," &c. Sincere in opposition to formal; obedience of the heart with the body. Both must be united; both make it an acceptable sacrifice.

4. *It must be open and uncompromising.* Not secret; not with policy, &c. This is mean and dishonorable to the sacred

cause. The apostles and martyrs were put to death for "open" obedience. They might have thought and felt as they pleased without persecution; but the love of Christ constrained them, &c. God is to be first; his honor and laws must ever have the pre-eminence; see it in the three Hebrews; in Daniel; in the apostles on this occasion. "Whoso is ashamed of me," &c. We are to testify, to witness, &c.; "living epistles," &c.

5. *It must be constant and persevering.* Not occasional acts, but the habit of the life; the general, the persevering course, even unto death. "He that endureth," &c. "Be faithful," &c.

6. *It must be humble and evangelical.* Our obedience is necessarily that of imperfect beings. After all, unprofitable servants; no room for self-complacency, &c. All must be accepted through Christ; my person, repentance, faith, prayers, and every thing. Consider,

II. OUR OBLIGATION TO TRUE OBEDIENCE. We ought,

1. *From the authority of God.* He has the right to legislate. You do not dispute this. It is our imperative duty, then, to obey. He is the greatest of all beings, infinitely glorious, &c. Disobedience is treason, rebellion, &c.

2. *From grateful feelings to God.* Disobedience is ingratitude. Is it not so in the child? in the servant? in the subject? Think of God, his goodness, love, and mercy. Behold nature, providence, grace. Look at earth, air, sky; especially look at the cross, the scenes of Calvary, &c.

3. *From the present and eternal advantages of obedience.* "His commandments are not grievous." "In keeping of them there is great reward." "Godliness is profitable." Was it not the advantage of the Israelites to look to the brazen serpent? of Naaman, to go and dip in Jordan? of the blind man, to go and wash in Siloam? of the 3000, to repent, believe, and be baptized? It is for our interest, present and eternal, to obey God.

APPLICATION.

1. *We ought to obey God rather than men.* However great, learned, pious, or distinguished.

2. *Let our obedience be prompt and immediate.* We should obey him now. Now we can, &c.

3. *Call upon all to repent and believe the gospel.*

EZEKIEL'S VISION OF THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES.

"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones," &c.—EZEKIEL xxxvii. 1–10.

EZEKIEL, the writer of the prophecies of this book, was the son of Buzi, and was carried away captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, in the year of the world 3405, or 598 years before the advent of Christ. He began to prophesy in the fifth year of his captivity, and continued his sacred office for about twenty or twenty-one years His prophecies are distinguished for their dark parabolical representations, and their highly figurative style. His descriptions are exceedingly bold, and often are wrought up with vehement energy, so as to possess a daring grandeur beyond any other portions of the sacred volume. Not so simple or perspicuous as the other prophets; but in majestic splendor he far excels them, and has no compeer, except in some of the resplendent visions of Isaiah, or the awfully grand predictions of the exiled John in Patmos. The vision we have selected for our present meditation manifestly relates to the restoration of the Jews, and is supposed to include both their return from Babylon, and also their restoration in the latter days to their own land. The former view was realized, when God turned back their captivity, and brought them back to their beloved land; their general restoration is yet to come. They appear at present scattered over the whole region of the valley of our world, without political existence or distinction; having residence everywhere, but citizenship nowhere. Their restoration, however, is matter of glorious certainty. The same hand that scattered will gather them; the same power that dispersed will collect them; and the Jewish stream of existence, which has never commingled with the waters of the common family of man, will return to fertilize and bless the land of Judea. That will be a glorious day, not only for themselves, but for the world. Hear what the apostle says, Rom. xi. 15, xxv. 6. But the vision of the prophet is beautifully applicable to the moral state of our world

and in this respect we shall now consider it. Let us accompany the prophet, and take a survey,

I. Of the dreary valley.

II. Hear the instructions given to him. And,

III. Witness the marvellous effects which followed. Let us take a survey,

I. Of the valley of dry bones.

1. *The valley is a fit emblem of our world.* Originally earth was closely allied to heaven. Our world was once the abode of purity, light, and felicity; now it is fallen, debased; the region of night, misery, and death. Once the garden of the Lord—the dwelling of the holy—favored by the communications of Jehovah—the presence of angels; now a waste howling wilderness, the residence of the unbelieving, and the seat of Satan. What mists of darkness encircle it; what sorrow, and misery, and wo distract it! it is the region of night, and the shadow of death. And this is the aspect of the whole valley, in all its length and breadth; in all its extent and circumference. The whole world lieth in the wicked one.

2. *See the condition of its inhabitants.* "A valley of dry bones." One vast graveyard; one extensive charnel-house. Not covered with the recently deceased remains of humanity, but with dry bones, the scattered fragments of past generations; heap upon heap, blanched and withered by every wind of heaven. But the question arises, what has produced this scene of desolation? Has some pestilence wasted? has famine dried up the reservoirs of existence? These are the slain of sin; these are the blighted remains of the pestilence of moral evil; these have perished in the want and famine which their rebellion and departure from God had produced. Now, in reference to these bones, observe,

(1.) *Their number.* "Many, very many," verse 2. Such is the moral state of the hundreds of myriads of our race. There is no exception to this. All have sinned; all are dead in trespasses, &c.; not one righteous, &c.

(2.) *Their peculiar appearance.* "Very dry." Doubtless, there is much difference in the condition of our race. Civilization makes a great difference; hence contrast the roaming savage and the intellectual Hindoo. The light of the gospel makes a great difference; hence contrast the Hindoo and European. But yet, as to the want of moral resemblance to God, and a life of holiness, all men are in one state of condemnation and death. Observe,

(3.) *Their hopelessness.* "Can these dry bones live?" &c., verse 3. Ask the philosopher, and he will confess he has no remedy for such moral dreariness; ask the naturalist; he will say there is hope of a tree, &c.; but here the bones are disembodied; no flesh, no sinews, and therefore no hope. The prophet in humility referred the subject back to God, "O Lord, thou knowest." Notice,

II. The instructions given to the prophet. "Prophesy," &c., verse 4. That is, preach. The subject is given, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." Now, objectors might say,

(1.) *How unphilosophical!* They cannot hear; to preach is foolish—out of the question. So might the prophet have replied. Or,

(2.) *It is unnecessary.* If they are raised, God must do it by miracle. Why, therefore, prophesy? If he will do it, he will do it. He must do all, or none. So say some very sapient persons in reference to preaching the gospel. It is no use, they say, to preach to dead sinners. When God intends to convert them, he will do it, and our calling them is in vain. Shall the wisdom of God or man stand? The prophet obeyed, and prophesied. Christ sent the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, and they obeyed. The authority of Christ still extends to the Christian ministry; and wo, wo, wo to that man who preaches not the gospel of Christ. The prophet, no doubt, cried loudly, earnestly, "Oh! ye dry bones," &c. Now mark,

III. The marvellous effects which followed.

1. *The dry bones heard.* The word of God can open the ears of the deaf, and can awaken the dead. The prophet might have lectured on philosophy, science, civilization, and morality, but they would not have heard. God's word is a hammer and fire; it is spirit and life. The latent caloric heard it, when he said, "Let there be light." The sea heard it; the dry land, &c.; and now the dry bones hear it.

2. *They were excited.* The stillness was disturbed, "There was a shaking," &c. verse 7. How often this has been the case

when the gospel has exerted its power on the soul! The three thousand on the day of pentecost; the jailer, &c. Fears excited; anxiety produced; prayer offered.

3. *They were brought together.* By the word, men are brought out of the world, and thus to associate together. Thus assemblies are convened, congregations collected. Now they are seen in the sanctuary.

4. *They were clothed with sinews and flesh.* No longer mere bones, dry, &c.; no longer apparently hopeless. Appearances now favorable; begin to look like men; to act, and think, and speak as rational beings; conduct now changed, &c.; habits given up; sins relinquished, &c.; but yet the vitality of religion—spiritual life—is wanting. So the prophet is now to call on the winds, verse 9. And then,

5. *They lived.* By the wind is intended God's Holy Spirit. So often thus likened, "The wind bloweth," &c. Now, the Spirit of God resuscitates; gives newness of life; raises from the dead, &c. "It is the Spirit that quickens."

6. *They appear as an exceeding great army.* Become the soldiers of Christ; fight the battles of the Lord—the good fight; and finally, receive the victorious everlasting crown and reward.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the morally dead state of sinners.
2. The efficacy of the divine word.
3. The importance of gospel prophesying.
4. The ability of sinners to hear and obey.
5. The Spirit's influence in regeneration.
6. The conflicts of the spiritual life.

THE SAVIOUR'S VISIT TO OUR WORLD.

A CHRISTMAS SKETCH.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people."—Luke i. 68, 69.

Of all events, that of the advent of the Saviour was the most glorious and interesting; all things connected with it are calculated to excite our wonder and command our praise. The glorious person appearing, the world from which he came, and the errand which brought him to our earth, are all subjects sublimely important and deserving our studious contemplation. It had been predicted that a herald or harbinger should prepare the way of the Lord. Now the tidings of John's conception were announced to Zechariah, but in consequence of his unbelief he was struck dumb, and it was only when John was to be circumcised according to the law that his mouth was opened, and he spake and blessed God, &c. Notice,

I. The declaration concerning the God of Israel. "He hath visited us."

II. The figurative representation of the Messiah. "Hath raised up a horn."

III. The praise which we are bound to offer in commemorating this event. "Blessed," &c.

I. The declaration concerning the God of Israel. No term so endearing to pious Jews as that of the God of Israel; it reminded them of the covenant he had made, the deliverance he had wrought, and the blessings he had conferred. God had often visited and often redeemed them in a temporal sense; from Egypt and Babylon. Many of these visits had been of a most striking character, as when he appeared to Moses in the bush—on Sinai—in the temple; but chiefly he visited them through the medium of the prophets. God "spake unto the fathers by the prophets;" but there was one visit above all the rest and to crown the whole, that in the person of his Son. Now of this visit of Jesus observe,

1. *It had been long promised and expected.* It was the essence of the first promise, and Eve looked for it and exclaimed, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Abel had the eye of his faith fixed upon it. So Abraham, he desired to see and did see Christ's day and was glad. To him all the prophets gave witness, and hence a general expectation had been kept up among the pious, to the time of his incarnation. In hope of Israel's Messiah thousands had fallen into the arms of the sleep of death.

(2.) It was a visit which had been *minutely* predicted. As to the miraculous nature of his advent, the place, and the time; at the time that the sceptre departed from Judah, &c.; when Daniel's seventy weeks

were accomplished, then did the illustrious visitant appear.

(3.) It was a visit distinguished for a condition of *voluntary abasement*. The Godhead descending to be veiled in flesh, leaving heaven for earth, a throne for a manger, &c.

(4.) It was still a visit of *magnificence* and *glory*. The heavens were illuminated by the star; the skies resounded with the anthem of praise. Angels descended and proclaimed his birth. "Unto you is born," &c.

(5.) It was a visit of *stupendous love*. "God so loved," &c. "Herein is love," &c. "He sent his Son not to condemn," &c. "He came into the world to save," &c. Hence it was a visit of redeeming power and mercy. "And redeemed." To buy back—to deliver—emancipate.

II. THE FIGURATIVE REPRESENTATION OF THE MESSIAH. "Horn of salvation."

(1.) A horn is a symbol of power and strength, see 1 Sam. ii. 1; 2 Sam. xxii. 3.

(2.) Or it may refer to the horns of the altar to which criminals fled when in imminent peril, and where, except in case of murder, they found a sanctuary. See the case of Adonijah, 1 Kings i. 50. Now Christ is the horn of salvation to the penitent sinner who is fleeing for mercy. None can be saved elsewhere, and none can perish there.

III. THE PRAISE WE SHOULD OFFER TO GOD IN COMMEMORATING THIS EVENT. "Blessed," &c. "Thanks be to God," &c. Praise may be uttered,

1. By *the lips*. And this is right and proper. Christ must be our song.

2. By the *feelings of the heart*. By thinking, meditating, loving, and delighting in Christ.

3. By the conduct of the *life*. "We are to show forth," &c. Live to Christ, extol him in our conduct, &c. Do his will, carry out his designs.

APPLICATION.

1. *This subject condemns those who make these commemorative seasons opportunities of folly and sin.* What would heathens think?

2. *Let Christians display a spirit and conduct worthy of their profession.*

3. *Receive Christ Jesus into your hearts by personal, living faith.*

AN EPITOME OF THE GOSPEL.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."—1 TIMOTHY i 15.

OUR text contains an epitome of the gospel. It is one of those exceedingly rich and comprehensive passages with which the epistles of Paul abound, and yet it may be allowed the pre-eminence of what even that distinguished apostle has penned or left on record for the consolation of the church and the hope of the world. Every word in the text is precious and momentous, and the whole is so comprehensive, that we might with propriety take the text as the basis of a series of discourses on the evidences and blessings of the Christian religion. The apostle had been referring to his own history, and the text is full of the emotion of his heart, see verse 12, &c. Notice,

I. THE PERSON TO WHOM THE TEXT REFERS. "Christ Jesus." Now in contemplating the blessed person of the Saviour, we notice,

1. *His deity*. The world's Redeemer is the blessed God. Jehovah of hosts is ever represented in the Old Testament scriptures as the Redeemer of mankind. This divine character Christ also assumed. "He who hath seen me hath seen the Father." "I and the Father are one." "He thought it not robbery," &c.

2. *His humanity*. His existence is clearly intimated before he came into the world. As Deity he existed from everlasting; when he came into the world he did not appear in the overwhelming *brightness* of his divine *glory;* he came wrapped in *mortal flesh;* he tabernacled in human nature; formerly in the cloud; now in our nature. He was made of a woman, &c. "God manifest in the flesh," &c. A child born—a son given

3. *In the union of the two natures*. God-man. Immanuel. Real man—true God. On one occasion the disciples beheld his glory; saw him ascend the mount as a man; beheld him transfigured and worshipped as the God of Moses and Elijah; this is a great mystery; it is the mystery of godliness.

II. HIS VISIT TO OUR WORLD. He came into the world; this had been long predicted and promised, long believed and expected; at length the period arrived; "the fulness of the times." Then he made his

advent and paid the visit of his redeeming love, &c. Lived in it for about thirty-three years. Three things connected with the visit.

1. *His holy life.* He exhibited every holy virtue, every grace, every excellency, entire spotlessness. His life, a day without the least cloud of imperfection.

2. *His divine teaching.* He taught men the way to eternal life; he made known the way of salvation; he revealed the will of his heavenly Father.

3. *His marvellous sufferings.* Poverty, contempt, hatred, persecution, death, connected with sufferings of soul the most intense; death the most ignominious and cruel; death followed by a resurrection the most marvellous.

III. THE GREAT END OF CHRIST'S ADVENT. "To save sinners." Violators of God's law, polluted, wretched, worthless sinners; sinners without plea or merit; sinners justly perishing by reason of their own guilt. Now observe,

1. *He came to save from sin and its consequences.* Look at sin. A disease; death its consequence. Treason; hell its punishment. Crime; remorse its punishment. Now his coming did not alter the fact of men being sinners, or render their sins less deserving punishment, or bribe the justice of God so as not to punish; but he paid the exaction; he died for the sinner—in his stead—took his place, so that through Christ the sinner may be pardoned. Now God can be just, &c. Now the penalty is withdrawn; the rebel may live; no necessity for his eternal death. "God so loved," &c.

2. *Into a state of holiness and its blessed results.* A sinner merely pardoned would immediately sin again, and thus would never be meet for the holy services of a holy world. Christ came into the world to exhibit real purity, and to enforce it; but more, to obtain it for us; this he has done by procuring the Holy Spirit, who renews the heart, changes the entire man, and gives power to love and serve God. This is the essence of salvation—to restore the lost image of God; and this will ensure the bestowment of eternal glory; made pure in heart, we shall see and enjoy God forever and ever.

IV. THE APOSTLE'S REMARKS CONCERNING THIS GREAT GOSPEL SAYING. He says that it is,

1. *Faithful.* That is, it is true; it is a verity, not a fable, not an imposition; that Christ lived, wrought miracles and was crucified, is attested by heathen and Jewish writers as well as Christians. The testimonies of Christians for 300 years, who were put to death by thousands for believing it and professing it. The power and influence of this truth, wherever it has been promulgated by preaching or diffusing the gospel, prove it.

2. *It is worthy of all acceptation.* Worthy of being accepted; that is, being believed and trusted in; to accept it, is to give full credit to it, and treat it as true; to believe it with all our hearts. Now, it is worthy of *all* acceptation, that is, a cordial, decided, and grateful acceptation. With joy and thanksgiving, &c. It is worthy of being accepted *by all.* All classes—learned and illiterate—rich and poor; all grades, profane and moral; all ages, young and old.

APPLICATION.

1. *But one saying in the world that meets the sinner's case, and it is this concerning Christ.* His cross and gospel, the only ground of hope.

2. *This saying every sinner is heir to.* Gospel has sent it to every creature, even the chief; the vilest man on earth is but a sinner; the best man is a sinner too.

3. *Accept it, or it will not, cannot save you.* Do it now. Prove it, &c.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

"Verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of women," &c.—MATTHEW xi. 11.

JOHN the Baptist had sent two disciples to inquire into the character of Jesus, and his profession of the Messiahship. It could not be that he thus sent for his own sake, for he had seen and heard the attestation of Christ even at his baptism; but, doubtless, he did this for the sake of his own disciples, that they might receive him, and cleave to him as the sent of God. The Saviour's account of John is peculiarly forcible and striking. He refers to the plain and powerful characteristics of John's manner, in verses 7 and 8; then to his exalted office, verses 9 and 10; and thus concludes the description. Our text may refer to his pe

culiarly holy character—to his powerful and effective ministry; but we rather think, to the particular office of John as the herald and harbinger of Christ. In this, he was greater than any of the prophets, &c.; yet in respect of the glory of the gospel dispensation, the least of the apostles of Christ would be greater and more dignified than John. Before we enter on the life of the Baptist, let us just glance at the prophecies which had respect to him; Isaiah xl. 3, &c.; Malachi iii. 1. The concluding prophecy, which referred to Christ, also noticed his illustrious harbinger. Observe, then, in reference to the Baptist,

I. His PARENTAGE AND BIRTH. His father, Zacharias, was,

(1.) Priest of the Lord. His mother was a holy woman; the cousin of the virgin mother of Jesus. Read the description of this godly pair, Luke i. 6.

(2.) He was of the course of Abia. David divided the priests into twenty-four classes, or courses, who performed their duty in the temple week by week. The priests generally resided in cities a little distance from Jerusalem. From these they came to the temple service, and then returned to their dwellings.

(3.) Zacharias was now engaged in his priestly service of offering incense to the Lord. In offering incense, three persons were engaged: one was to remove the ashes of the previous service; another to bring the pan of burning coals from the altar of burnt sacrifice, and then retire; the third was to pour the incense on the coals, and while the smoke filled the place, to intercede with Jehovah on behalf of the people. This Zacharias was doing, when he beheld on the right side of the altar, the angel of the Lord. The fears of Zacharias were aroused. Fear is the attendant of sin. The best men feel their sinfulness, and therefore fear.

(4.) The celestial messenger, however, now reveals his errand; see Luke i. 13, &c. He also reveals his own name—'Gabriel," one of the chief and exalted attendants of God; he had six hundred years before visited Daniel.

(5.) Observe Zacharias's difficulty of belief, verse 18. Here was the struggle between doubt and faith, "Lord, I believe," &c. God's word enough; nothing can be really stronger; he evidently desired a sign. Observe,

(6.) The token giver, verse 20. A very painful one; yet, in the midst of deserved wrath, God remembered mercy. Nothing more grievous than unbelief; it is an insult offered to the veracity of God. He was now the subject of solicitude, as he did not appear at the usual period, &c., verse 21. At length he came forth, but his appearance and manner indicated that something extraordinary had occurred, &c., verse 22. Zacharias, notwithstanding all the events which had taken place, continued his service in the temple, and when his period of ministration was ended, he returned to his own house.

(7.) At length the birth of John took place, amidst the joy and thanksgiving of his friends, verse 58; and on the day of his circumcision, they proposed to call him after the name of his father, Zacharias; but his mother said, "Nay, let him be named John." Zacharias was then appealed to, and he asked for a writing-table, and he wrote his name, "*John*," and immediately his tongue was loosed, and he spake and praised God, verse 64–66. Let us just glance,

II. At THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF JOHN. Now observe,

1. *He was sanctified to the Lord from the womb.* God raised him up for his own special work and glory. The same is also recorded of Jeremiah, i. 5; and it was equally so with Samuel.

2. *He was to be a Nazarite in his course of life;* verse 15. Thus he was not to drink either wine or strong drink. God designed him for an especial work, and demanded great austerity of life. He was to be an example of self-denial and self-government to the people. One inference can be drawn from this: God has connected especial honor with those who avoid intoxicating fluids.

3. *He was to be filled with the Holy Ghost.* Thus in heart and mind, in lip and life, in knowledge, and unction, and power, he was to be a burning and shining light, and a faithful herald of his blessed Lord, &c. Learn,

1. That heads of families should study the graphic exhibition of domestic piety as given in the account of the parents of John, verse 6.

2. While we consider Zacharias and Elizabeth as highly favored of the Lord, yet think on our superior privileges and

mercies. "To us a child is born," &c.; the child Jesus; the Lord, the Saviour.

3. To testify of him messengers of mercy have been sent to us. Have we heard, believed, and been brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus?

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

SKETCH II.

"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."—MATTHEW xi. 11.

HAVING previously directed your attention to several leading features in the person of this distinguished servant of God, we now have to contemplate his ministry and public character. A word or two, however, first, respecting his personal appearance and mode of life.

(1.) *His appearance was peculiarly plain.* His garment was made of the coarse camel's hair, bound round him with a leathern girdle—a dress which had often been worn by the Jewish prophets. How great the contrast between his costume and that of some modern preachers of the gospel, who study elegance and finery; whose fingers and persons are often arrayed with rings and jewels; a sad example to the auditories they address.

(2.) *His mode of life was peculiarly austere.* "And his meat was locusts and wild honey." Locusts were only eaten by the poorest of the people; and in this description we are reminded of the humble class of persons with whom he chiefly mixed, and the abstemiousness he observed with regard to his food. Many persons live only to eat and attend to the appetites of the animal man. John only ate to live. He was indifferent to the luxuries of life, and existed to execute his high office and glorify God. In referring to John's public labors, observe,

I. THE SPHERE WHICH HE PRINCIPALLY OCCUPIED. The district called the "wilderness of Judea," was not a dreary, uninhabited part of the land, but one less populated than other regions. It would have been out of character for John to have retired from mankind, when he came expressly to teach them. In this wilderness there were several villages, of which Bethabara was one and the chief. Here, at some distance from the noisy, busy cities, did he publish the nature of his message, and the truths of his great commission. To the standard of truth John elevated, great numbers resorted; so much so, that in hyperbolical language, "there went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea;" that is, great numbers of the people. Notice,

II. THE SPIRIT OF JOHN'S MINISTRY. The spirit of John's ministry had been typified in the life and labors of Elijah the prophet, verse 14; Mal. iv. 5. The period when both were called, was one of general declension. In the plainness of their attire they resembled each other; in their holy daring, and lofty, courageous spirit; in their zeal for the glory of God; in faithfully reproving iniquity in exalted places; and as Elijah just went before the prophetical dispensation, and introduced it, so John came to prepare the way for the great Prophet, the heavenly teacher, and the gospel dispensation. Observe,

III. THE NATURE OF HIS MINISTRY. This embraced four things:—

1. *To convince the people of their sins.* There was a spiritual apathy on the people generally; among the Pharisees, a spirit of self-righteousness, and among the Sadducees, a spirit of skepticism and unbelief. He labored to awaken the careless, to strip the Pharisees of their hypocrisy, and to arouse all classes to a sense of religion.

2. *Repentance.* This was John's great doctrine. "Repent." Change your course of life; think differently, feel differently, act differently; he demanded, too, *fruits* of repentance; see Matt. iii. 8, &c.

3. *Baptism.* He was emphatically styled the "Baptist." In the Dutch version he is called the "dipper." He baptized the people in Jordan. On the repentance of the people, he baptized them for the remission of sins. Thus he said, "Forsake your evil doings, confess your faults, be baptized, and expect the Messiah, whose herald I am, and ye shall obtain forgiveness of sin."

4. *Thus his ministry was to prepare a people for the Lord.* Having gone forth for some period doing so, he was then honored by being called to baptize Jesus, his Lord, and introduce the Saviour to the Jewish nation. This he did, his humility being overruled by Christ; for when Jesus had come ninety miles to John, John confessed his unworthiness for the office; but the **Re-**

deemer said, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh," &c. It was now that John truly said to his disciples respecting his own ministry, "I must decrease, but he (i. e. Jesus) must increase."

(1.) John's ministry was to a great extent *successful*. Many heard, and feared, and turned to the Lord. His known sanctity, and his holy fidelity, gave him great influence over the people, and his name and virtues were greatly venerated by the Jews.

(2.) His ministry was, however, but of *short duration*. It is probable that John did not begin his work more than a year before Christ's baptism, and considerably before Christ's death it terminated. This will lead us to consider,

IV. The tragical death of the Baptist; Matt. xiv. 1. Herod, the tetrarch, had married his brother Philip's wife, although his brother was still living. This wicked exhibition of adultery and incest, John had faithfully reproved, and had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have her," &c., verse 4. In this the Baptist exposed his life, for Herod was urged by Herodias to kill him, and would have put him to death but for fear of the people. An occasion, however, is soon found for the removal of this preacher of righteousness, Matt. xiv. 6. Herod's birthday is kept; here was music, and feasting, and dancing; the daughter of Herodias so pleased Herod and the guests, that he said, "Ask of me," &c. Here was a rash and foolish engagement, made under the influence of sensual excitement, and made to a girl on account of her skill and grace in dancing, &c. The daughter consults with the mother, and the mother instructed her as to the nature of her request. Who could have supposed the horrid request, which the sequel of the history presents, would have been made! She asks not for an estate, riches, or glory, but for a head—the head of a living human being; the head of a servant of the living God; the head of John the Baptist!

The king is sorry. Exceedingly so, &c.; yet for his oath's sake, and for his honor with the guests, he consents. Here a wicked vow is still more wickedly kept; the principle the same as the false honor of the duellist and the gambler of our own time; the honor of fiendish spirits; of proud human demons.

The decree is given, for the request is instant. "Give me," says a young, attractive damsel, "*here,* now at this feast, at this time, give me the head of the Baptist in a platter or dish."

The executioner is dispatched. The holy man is secretly beheaded; his head is placed in the horrid dish, and brought to the banquet of wine and revelling; the damsel receives it with the awful distortions of death in the muscles of the countenance, and she gives it to her mother. Here the affecting narrative terminates. History records that the vengeance of God rested upon each of the perpetrators of this atrocious deed. Herod's overthrow soon followed, and he was banished to Lyons, in Gaul. It is said of the impious daughter of Herodias, that as she was crossing a frozen river the ice separated, and she sank to the neck, when two pieces severed her head from the body.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the mysteriousness of divine providence.* The enemies of God often in purple, in pomp, &c.; John in prison; beheaded. A glance at the judgment, and the eternal state, will reconcile us to the dispensation: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," and especially "for the Lord." Sooner home, sooner glorified.

2. *The snares of unlawful pleasures.* How ruinous has been the banquet! more so than war, or pestilence, or famine. How hardening, &c. Wine is not only a mocker, but often a blood-thirsty demon.

3. *Have we received the Messiah, and the kingdom he came to establish?* This is the great question; personal—individual—universal.

THE POOR, &c. OF THE STREETS AND LANES OF THE CITY INVITED.

"Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind."—Luke xiv. 21.

Our text is part of the parable of the marriage supper, which is designed to exhibit the abundant provision of the gospel, and the sinful rejection of it by unbelieving sinners. Man, by reason of transgression, had involved himself in wretchedness and mis

ery. As a sinful rebel, he had forfeited all claim to the divine goodness and bounty; here we see then the grace of God in freely providing the means of happiness for his ruined creatures. The blessings of the gospel are likened to a feast, a great supper; here we have suitable provision; the richest and most costly provision; here is an overflowing provision; an abundance, enough for all; the invitation issued was of the most free and generous kind, verses 16, 17.

The conduct of the bidden guests was most ungrateful and wicked. "And they all with one consent," &c. It was then that the servants showed these things, &c.; and he said, "Go out quickly," &c. Notice,

I. The sphere of ministerial labor. "Streets and lanes of the city." In other passages it is said, "the highways and hedges," &c. Originally God was worshipped in the temple, and in the synagogues about Judea. When John the Baptist, however, came, he went abroad into the public places, and cried, "Repent ye," &c. Now Jesus acted upon the same principle. He addressed the people on the sea-shore, on the mountain top, in the highways, &c. The apostles acted in like manner, they went forth preaching the kingdom of the grace of God in the streets of Jerusalem, &c. Our missionaries have to act upon the same plan; if they were to wait until the heathen came to them, few would hear the word of life; it is desirable in our own country that this also should be done. Many never think of God or his house; but if entreated they might be induced to hear: how can this be done? both by preaching in the streets, &c., and by visiting the families in our benighted neighborhoods, and persuading them to visit the house of God.

II. Observe the objects of ministerial effort. "The poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind." If we consider these words literally, then we may consider that the wretched, in general, are to be specially invited, &c. The gospel is emphatically sent to the poor; it is of the greatest importance to them in this life; their souls are of incalculable value—of eternal worth; but do we not see that the text is applicable in a spiritual sense to all men?

1. *All sinners are truly poor.* Poor as it respects the soul and eternity; as poor as the starving prodigal.

2. *All sinners are maimed and halt* Sin has destroyed the energies of the soul; they have not the power our holy parents in Paradise had. They are the slaves of the enemy, &c.

3. *All sinners are blind.* In the darkness of moral ignorance—in the darkness of unbelief—in the darkness of condemnation. They see not their own condition—they see not the beauty of religion—they see not the excellency of Christ—they see not the preciousness of the gospel, or the importance of salvation. A poor, maimed, blind creature, in the street, is only a faint type of the true misery of the sinner. To be blind on the verge of eternity! on the margin of the fathomless lake of fire!

II. The direction given respecting ministerial effort. It is personal effort. They are to go out. Many duties connected with the ministerial work; reading, study, &c.; but all these must be in reference to the work of preaching—of inviting sinners. Now, in going out, three things are important:—

1. *We must go out in Christ's name.* We are his servants; he commissions us; all our authority is derived from him.

2. *With his message.* What he has enjoined. Many subjects might amuse, might interest, &c. Wonders of nature—of providence. The earth—the heavens, &c. No, it must be the gospel—the good news of the kingdom; publishing Christ as the only Saviour. "This is a faithful saying," &c. "The supper is ready," &c. There must be,

3. *Promptitude of action.* "Quickly." Now there are three reasons for this:—

(1.) The work is divine and spiritual: this is the chief thing. Soul and eternity first—God and his glory first.

(2.) Our time of labor is limited. What the minister does, he must do quickly. "I must work," &c. Soon we must give an account.

(3.) Sinners are perishing; every day—every hour—every moment, they are hurrying into eternity; every soul thus lost is of eternal value; then it must be done quickly; the person enveloped with flames, must be saved quickly; the shipwrecked mariner must have the life-boat quickly; the dying sinner must have the balm of life quickly. When the soul and heaven are concerned, every thing must be done quickly.

APPLICATION.

1. *You have often been addressed.* Have you obeyed the gospel? Have you been brought into the favor and family of God?

2. *Urge it upon all to-night.* We exhort —we entreat—we invite all.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—MATTHEW xxii. 11–13.

THE gospel minister must declare the whole counsel of God. We must exhibit both the promises and the threatenings; we must invite by all the greatness and preciousness of the provision, but we must also alarm by exhibiting the terrific consequences of refusing the overtures of life. In the parable of which the text is the conclusion, the embassy of love and mercy had first of all been rejected; but afterwards, a number had been prevailed upon to comply with the invitation, and the table was furnished with guests; but there is presented to us the fearful condition of one of the guests. "And when the king came in to see the guests," &c. To realize the force of the picture, imagine the splendid guest-chamber of an eastern monarch, arrayed in all the magnificence of oriental grandeur. The wedding ceremonies of the heir to the throne are to be sumptuously celebrated. The provision is costly and abundant. To add to the effect, and to exhibit the riches and glory of the feast, costly vestments are prepared for all the guests, and in these it is expected they will all appear at the royal banquet. The room is splendidly illuminated; the guests are all assembled, when the king in majestic state is announced. In looking around, an individual is perceived without the appointed garment; he is interrogated by the monarch, and it is found that he is an intruder, or one who has treated his king with contempt. He is immediately seized by the servants and borne into the gloomy prison at the base of the palace, where is darkness, and weeping and gnashing of teeth. Such might be considered the literal illustration of the text. Let us reflect on the spiritual import and design of the passage. We must consider what we are to understand,

I. BY THE WEDDING GARMENT. Now it is clear that it is the costume, or spiritual dress, necessary for the enjoyment of heaven. We need not then be in doubt on this subject. The garment is "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." It is the complete renewal of the soul in the likeness of the divine image, which consists of knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Now this holiness of heart and life is often described as a garment. "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem," Job xxix. 14. Hence Isaiah says, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels," lxi. 10. Hence the church is thus described by the psalmist, "The king's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold," &c., Psalm xlv. 13. Hence too when the prodigal returned, he was adorned with the best robe. The Laodiceans were exhorted to buy gold, &c. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed," &c. Rev. iii. 18; and this agrees with the description of the heavenly company: "And lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," Rev. vii. 9. Mark,

II. THE SOLEMN SCRUTINY. "The king came in," &c. This scrutiny,

1. *Was divine.* The survey was made by that omniscient Being whose eyes are as a flame of fire. Nothing is more dangerous than for mortals to judge one another, "Judge not," &c. It is not likely that even in a future state we shall possess the power of discerning the heart; but the king immortal, invisible, "whose eyes," &c. He seeth the thoughts afar off. Before him all things are naked, &c. At once he beheld the man without the wedding garment.

2. *This scrutiny was personal.* The guests were not surveyed in masses—not

in nations, sects, or churches, or families; but in their individual character; never was a nation all holy and sacred; nor yet a sect—nor church—nor perhaps an entire family. Religion is a personal concern; it is so from first to last; it will be so in its great and momentous consequences to all eternity.

III. The awful detection. "He saw there a man," &c. We may form three conjectures as to this robeless character.

1. *It might have resulted from carelessness.* He did not attend to the requirements of the king; he never duly thought and reflected; was never deeply impressed with the dignity and glory for which a sacred preparation was necessary. How many such are now in the presence of God; no deep impression as to the necessity of vital religion, of holiness of heart.

2. *It might have resulted from procrastination.* He had perhaps been aware of the requisite costume, but had deferred the matter until it was too late. How many of such are here this evening? You believe in the doctrine of regeneration, &c.; but you remain the children of nature; spiritual piety is put off; it has been so for years; it may be so until it is too late.

3. *It might have resulted from proud and wicked preference.* Perhaps thought it not essential; had other views; would trust to the mercy of the king, or to his own beautiful habiliments. Are there not some of this class present? You do not like spiritual, internal, evangelical godliness; satisfied without this. Moral, benevolent, nominally Christians. Observe,

IV. The awful investigation. "Friend, how camest thou," &c.

1. *This investigation was public.* Before all the guests. The enemies of Christ will be publicly confounded at the last day; clothed with shame and contempt.

2. *This investigation was reasonable.* It gave an opportunity for the exhibition of righteousness. "How," &c. Give a reason, &c. God will allow the sinner to plead. This investigation,

3. *Was overwhelming.* "He was speechless." He was surprised, detected, ashamed; he had no reason to assign, hence he was confounded. Mark,

V. The dreadful punishment. Notice,

1. *The removal.* "Take him away." From a palace to a prison—from a feast to wretchedness—from angels to devils—from heaven to hell.

2. *The sentence.* "Cast him into outer darkness." Regions of darkness—chains of darkness—the blackness of darkness.

3. *The misery.* "There shall be weeping and gnashing," &c. The retrospect shall cause this; a life of folly, of gross infatuation, &c. The present, covered with shame, the gnawing of conscience; the gloomy prospect, no hope of release, or even alleviation. Lost, irreparably lost; lost forever.

APPLICATION.

1. *Now all that is necessary for heaven may be obtained, and that by all.*

2. *Let professors examine themselves, &c.* Are you in Christ? Have you put him on? &c.

3. *Let sinners be entreated.* Listen to the voice of the gospel and live.

THE WOMAN WITH THE BLOODY ISSUE.

"And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians," &c.—Mark v. 25, &c.

Our subject is one of the cures effected by the miraculous power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Numerous and astonishing were the miracles of mercy which he performed; and it is worthy of note, that the diseases he cured were such as were counted hopeless by the ordinary modes of healing. Such was the leper, yet he had but to say, "Be thou clean," &c.; such was natural blindness, yet he opened the eyes of the man born blind; such was established paralysis; but to the most inveterate instance of palsied misery he said, "Arise, take up thy bed," &c. An issue of blood, of twelve years' standing, was a disease evidently of this kind. Let us see in this diseased woman,

I. An emblem of the sinner's spiritual state.

II. In her mode of application, an example worthy of the sinner's imitation.

III. In her cure, a pledge of the sinner's acceptance and salvation. In this woman we see,

I. An emblem of the sinner's spiritual condition. Four points: a distressing disease; of long continuance; growing worse

and worse; and incurable by human agency. Observe in this woman,

1. *A distressing disease.* "An issue of blood." The disease was one of Levitical uncleanness; no doubt a cause of great suffering, and which, according to the Mosaic ritual, excluded her from the society of others. Now, sin is often thus represented. It is the plague of the heart; it is internal and universal spiritual defilement; see Isaiah i. 4. This moral pollution excludes the soul from the fellowship of a holy God, and the enjoyment of holy services. With this every sinner is afflicted. This woman's affliction,

2. *Was of long continuance.* "Twelve years." Thus, it was deeply seated and established in the system. The disease of sin is of still longer continuance. Look back to your youth—to your childhood; the very first actions, thoughts, and words evince that the heart is corrupt, and the soul under the influence of moral disease. Thus for years it has been more and more deeply rooted in the system, and establishing its evil dominion and habits in the inmost recesses of the soul. The affliction of this woman,

3. *Grew worse and worse.* Sin never consumes itself; never expires of itself; never heals of itself; neither is it ever stationary. Like the stream ever flowing; tree ever growing; waxing worse and worse; spreading and extending its power over the whole man.

4. *It was incurable by human instrumentality.* She had felt it, and deplored it, and sought its removal. She had suffered many things, verse 26; she had spent all that she had; she had applied to many physicians. How often do sinners exactly copy her example; go to a variety of sources for happiness and peace, and find none. Sometimes to the works of the law; sometimes to nominal religion; sometimes to penances, fasts, &c.; sometimes to almsgiving, &c. But all our time, all our energies, are thus employed in vain. None of these can heal or save; all physicians of no value. Happy for this daughter of affliction that Jesus, the great healer, passed by where she dwelt; that she heard of him; and that she presented herself to his compassionate nature.

II. IN HER MODE OF APPLICATION; AN EXAMPLE WORTHY OF THE SINNER'S IMITATION. Having heard of Jesus, she,

1. *Exercised faith in his healing power* For she said, "If I may," &c., verse 28 Now this was strong faith, marvellous faith, of which there had been no previous instance. He had spoken and cured diseases; but she believed that contact with his garment was enough. Thus the sinner must believe. Observe,

2. *Her faith overcame the obstacles in her way to the Saviour.* There was a crowd of persons; many persons intervened between her and the Messiah; it required activity, energy, and resolution; had she waited, or neglected the opportunity, her disease would have remained. There will ever be a crowd of obstacles in the way to the Saviour. Every penitent has so found it; so that decision and striving are ever necessary.

3. *Her faith brought her to the saving extraction of the Redeemer's virtue.* As she desired, and believed, and hoped, so it was to her. She touched the hem of his garment, and the virtue was drawn out, "and straightway," &c., verse 29. The exercise of faith in Christ is always followed by like results. But this leads us to consider her cure,

III. AS A PLEDGE OF THE SINNER'S ACCEPTANCE AND SALVATION. The Saviour knew the effect produced by the going out of the virtue of his healing power. He interrogated her, that the case might be evident, and that he might honor the faith, and confirm the cure. In her case we have a pledge,

1. *He can save and heal the soul, as well as the body.* He came expressly to do this; the instances are innumerable.

2. *He will save every believing, trusting sinner.* He has engaged to do it; he loves to do it; he longs to do it; it is his reward and joy.

3. *He will save in the same way, and by the same means, and on the same terms.* By his inherent virtue and merits—the efficacy of his atoning blood; by the same means—the faith of the applicant; and on the same terms—"without money," &c. Freely, fully, and forever.

APPLICATION.

1. *How many are still afflicted with the plague of sin?* Apply to Jesus all of you, and now. He is the only physician; he alone can save.

2. *How many are anxious to obtain it?*

Do not let the press keep you back; be resolved; be in earnest. Imitate the spirit and conduct of this woman.

3. *How many are healed?* Oh! exhibit much love and gratitude to Christ, and much compassion for souls. Proclaim this Saviour everywhere, &c.

MARTHA'S INORDINATE CAREFULNESS.

"But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her, therefore, that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things."—Luke x. 40, 41.

All circumstances and conditions of life have their respective snares and dangers. There are temptations and evils to which all persons are liable; often in danger even from lawful things. Prudence is an important virtue, but often degenerates into selfishness and distrust. Generosity and hospitality have a prominent place in religion; but here we have an instance of their excess being pernicious. Martha and Mary were two Christian sisters, who, with their brother Lazarus, resided at Bethany. They were the object of the Saviour's especial love, and were favored with his gracious visits. Here Jesus was probably often entertained by these beloved female worthies. The text refers to one instance, and shows how, with all her excellencies, Martha evinced a spirit of over-carefulness, so as to call forth the gentle yet pointed admonition of the Redeemer, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful," &c. Observe,

I. The evidence of Martha's carefulness. Now, three terms are employed in reference to it. Her mind was distracted by,

1. *Multiplicity of objects.* "Was cumbered," &c. The mind is so formed that it cannot actively pursue more than one object at the same time. Our real necessities are few, our imaginary ones numberless. "Much serving" was injurious to Martha, and less serving would have been more acceptable to Christ.

2. *Her mind was tortured with over-solicitude.* "Thou art careful." Carefulness and solicitude are highly proper. Neither reason nor religion requires an improvident recklessness, or thoughtless indifference. A man must employ his reflective powers in providing for his household. There is a becoming care highly proper both as it respects body, soul, reputation, &c. The term often so rendered in our translation, had been better translated, "anxious;" see Matt. vi. 25–34. "Be careful," &c. This anxiety is felt when the mind is tortured and torn by care; when care throws her dark shadows across the mind, and makes it gloomy and fretful. Now, Martha was quite anxious, &c.

3. *She was distracted even to trouble.* "And troubled." Now, this is the necessary result of anxiety. Mind becomes troubled; agitated between hope and fear; perplexed; no calm, no quiet, no enjoyment; the opposite of a placid, peaceful, happy state. We have thus seen the evidences of Martha's carefulness. Consider,

II. The evil of it. Jesus evidently designed his remark to be considered in the way of admonition. "Martha, Martha," &c. You will see,

1. *It prevented attention to better things.* Here was the Son of the most high God, the world's Messiah; yet, instead of being an intense listener to his words, she was losing this great opportunity, and distinguished privilege. Is it not so often with you? Does not over-carefulness produce neglect of the Bible? prayer? ordinances? &c.

2. *It led her into censoriousness of spirit,* "My sister hath left me," &c. This was unkind, and an evidence of bitterness of spirit, which ought not to have existed, much less appeared in presence of such an illustrious visitor. Martha is a specimen of all anxious persons; fretful and peevish tempers are often the result.

3. *It caused her to treat the Saviour with apparent disrespect.* No doubt she loved him, and intensely; but Martha ought not to have said, "Lord, dost thou not care?" Had she forgotten the dignity of her guest? Did she not know what it was his meat and drink to do? Now, anxious worldly care is ever in danger of reflecting upon the divine Redeemer, his providence, plans, &c.

4. *It subjected her to the reproof of her divine Lord.* "Martha," &c. Why so anxious? Thou blamest Mary; but I must tell thee "one thing," &c., "and Mary hath," &c. Now, worldly anxiety

ever displeasing to Christ, and ever injurious to the soul. Let us consider,

III. The remedies by which it may be avoided.

1. *By allowing spiritual things to have the ascendency.* Spiritual food, raiment, health, riches, &c. "Seek ye first," &c.

2. *By cultivating a spirit of moderation in reference to temporal things.* "Let your moderation," &c. Only a little is necessary; only a little can be enjoyed; only wanted for a short time.

3. *By considering the utter inefficiency of worldly care to attain its end.* Your anxiety will produce no beneficial results; nay, it will prevent the enjoyment of what you have. "Who by anxious thought can make one hair?" &c.; see Matt. vi. 24, &c.

4. *By seriously considering the eternity into which we are hastening.* Soon we shall leave all behind—houses, riches, possessions; soon we shall have done with poverty and affliction. Oh! think of heaven and eternity! Why should pilgrims be anxious? citizens of glory!

APPLICATION.

1. *Address the moral, and those who admire religion, and are yet strangers to its power.* What is it keeps you back? Are you not careful? &c.

2. *Urge upon all, supreme attention to the salvation of the soul.*

3. *We cannot be too deeply concerned for the riches of glory.* Let us seek to "lay up treasure in heaven," &c.

MARY'S HAPPY CHOICE.

"But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."—Luke x. 42.

We have previously directed your attention to the spirit Martha evinced, and the reproof which Jesus administered on her anxiety about many things. We have now to contemplate the character and spirit of Mary.

(1.) You will observe, that Mary displayed intense attention to the words of Jesus; she heard with eagerness, and with delight, the discourse of the Saviour.

(2.) The humility and reverence of Mary are also stated. "She sat at his feet." The proper place for the pupil, for the disciple. Religion ever commences in this way; attention to the truths of the gospel, and humbleness and docility of mind in the reception of its sacred contents. Our text contains the approbation of the Saviour as to Mary's conduct. "But one thing," &c. Need I say that it is clear Jesus referred to her attention to the soul; giving the preference to spiritual matters—the reception of the words of Christ; in one word, true religion is the "one thing," &c. Observe, the subject directs us,

I. To the unity of true religion. "One thing." It consists in the possession of the grace and Spirit of God, and this is its essential identity. There are not many true religions; never was but one true and acceptable religion. In all ages it has been one; in all climes it is one. The means of religion have varied; dispensations changed; the laws, &c., have been altered; but religion itself has ever been "one thing." True religion is connected with various blessings and privileges, yet is one in character and essence, and one word may express the whole—Love! Love to God, and love to man. Observe,

II. Religion is a voluntary thing. "Mary hath chosen." Reason and revelation establish this:—

(1.) Reason despises force and coercion in all matters of mind. Force may make slaves and hypocrites, but cannot give to the soul the feelings of love and delight.

(2.) Revelation from first to last goes upon this principle. Remember what God said to Cain, "If thou doest well," &c. Joshua to the Israelites, "Behold I have set," &c. God solemnly affirms this by Ezekiel, xxxiii. 10, 11. Paul, although arrested by the supernatural appearance of the Saviour, yet was not coerced, for he says, "I was not disobedient," &c. Jesus, too, when speaking of Mary, says, "She hath chosen," &c. Let no man say he is wicked of necessity; depraved of necessity. Every man may believe and obey the gospel who hears it. "For faith cometh by," &c. "And whosoever calleth," &c. Christ laid the blame upon the will, "Ye will not," &c. Notice,

III. Religion is emphatically a good thing. "That good part." It is good,

1. *In its author and origin.* Every work of God is good. It is his own creation; has his own signet; elevates men to his likeness; tested and tried by the highest standard it is good.

2. *It is good in its adaptation to the soul.* The soul's good. It is the food of the soul; dress, health, and life of the soul.

3. *Good in all its influences.* Breathes good-will to all men; in every circle and sphere. It makes man a blessing to his species, and an ornament to the world.

4. *Good without any admixture.* No evil in it. Like its Author, it is light, and in it is no darkness at all.

IV. RELIGION IS A SURE AND CERTAIN THING. "Shall not be taken away." Here is stability—permanent stability. You cannot say so of any thing else. Who would dare to say it of riches? of honor? of health? of friends? or of life? No; all these are evanescent. We are never sure, &c.; but this is sure. "Shall not?" &c. "God will not," &c. His gifts are without repentance. Satan cannot; the world cannot; the world can neither give it nor take it away. If lost, we must freely abandon it; draw back, &c. It is ever sure and certain. "He who hath begun," &c. "I give unto my sheep," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *What is engaging your chief attention?* Do not trifle away time, opportunities, means, &c.

2. *Now accept the offer of eternal life.* Let this be the turning point. Now bow; now yield yourselves to God.

3. *Believers, thank God, and take courage.* Yours is the approbation of Christ. This is the soul's highest honor, and its sweetest bliss.

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

"One thing is needful."—LUKE x. 42.

WE design on this occasion to press true religion upon you, from its being emphatically the "one thing needful." It is indispensable to the present and eternal well-being of man. Let us ask and answer a few questions, so as to illustrate the sentiment of the text.

I. FROM WHENCE DOES THE NECESSITY OF RELIGION ARISE?

1. *From the constitution of the soul of man.* The soul was formed and designed for religion. True religion implies knowledge—faith—love—righteousness. The faculties of man are capable of these, designed for these. There is light for the understanding, truth for the judgment, motives to influence the will, love for the affections, and peace for the conscience.

2. *From the fallen and wretched state of man.* He is not now in a perfect, happy, and holy state. What can disenthral him? what exalt? what purify? what console? Nothing but religion. Learning and education cannot.

3. *From man's responsible state and character.* Man is accountable to God. Who does not feel this? Every man must give an account to God; be judged, and rewarded or punished in the eternal state. For this in our natural estate we are wholly unfit; cannot shake off our accountability. Religion invests us with a blessed meetness for the judgment-day. It erases the stains of past guilt; it enters our names in the Lamb's book of life; gives a meetness for eternal glory.

II. FOR WHOM IS IT NEEDFUL? One word might answer this; but we must particularize.

1. *It is needful for the young.* "Wherewith shall a young man," &c. It is the unerring pilot of the young; it is the guardian; it is the ornament; it has to do with all their concerns; with health, reputation, subsistence, long life. "Godliness is profitable," &c.; see Prov. iii. 11–26.

2. *It is needful for parents and heads of families.* Most parents are truly anxious to feed, clothe, and educate their children; but if children have souls, they require much more than this. Do they not require a religious training? a consistent example? and fervent prayer with them and for them? What parent can do these things without religion? What a fearful account will prayerless parents have to give at the last day!

3. *It is needful for the aged.* A man never can outlive his evil nature and his sins. The sinner, though he lives a hundred years, yet he shall die accursed. How dreadful for life to be ending, and the great work of life not begun; for spring, for summer, and for harvest to be over, &c. Nothing can make the dim eye bright but this.

4. *It is needful for the rich.*

(1.) Prevents riches from being a curse.

(2.) Does what riches cannot do—gives peace, &c.

(3.) Makes riches a double blessing.

5. *It is needful for the poor.* Bible—the poor man's book; Christ—the poor man's Saviour; the gospel—the poor man's portion in life; the crown of glory—the poor man's reward in heaven. It sanctifies and sweetens poverty, &c.

III. When is it needful?

1. *In health and strength.* Even these cannot make the mind really happy without it. Religion is the true health and vigor of the soul.

2. *In times of peril and sickness.* What anxiety is connected with these! Now, the dissipating scenes of life out of reach. How precious to know that the affliction is administered by our Friend and Father; that he is the refiner; that the end is our good; to be patient, resigned, happy.

3. *In the hour of death.* To illumine; to sustain; to save.

APPLICATION.

1. *Let me urge all classes to choose religion.*

2. *Do it now.* This day; this hour.—It will be important,

3. *Through all eternity.*—It is that alone which will produce everlasting felicity in the world to come.

THE CALL OF MATTHEW.

"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he said unto him, Follow me; and he arose and followed him."—Matthew ix. 9.

The blessed Redeemer was never out of the way of benevolence and mercy; wherever he went he always found fit objects for the exercise of his grace and compassion. You will perceive in the eighth chapter, that he had been healing a man of that dreadful disease, the leprosy. Restoring the centurion's servant; then he went out into the coast of the Gadarenes. On the voyage, by his word he stilled the tempest; when he arrived there he restored two who had been possessed of devils; and caused the herd of swine to receive the dispossessed spirits, which made them run violently into the sea, where they were drowned. The Gadarenes loved their swine more than the world's Redeemer, so "they besought him to depart out of their coasts." Christ then entered into a ship, and came into his own city, by which we understand Capernaum; hence it was an ancient saying, "Bethlehem brought him forth, Nazareth brought him up, and Capernaum was his principal dwelling-place." As Jesus was passing forth, "he saw a man named Matthew." Observe,

I. The person referred to. "Matthew," &c. Let us notice,

1. *His personal history.* He is generally supposed to have been the son of a sister or cousin of the mother of Jesus, and thus was a distant relative of the Messiah. It seems after his conversion that he was also called Levi. Observe,

2. *His occupation.* He was a publican, or collector of the taxes and customs; these taxes were levied by the Romans upon the Jews, and were exceedingly grievous to them, as being a visible mark of their subjection to the Roman yoke; besides, these taxes were sold to the highest bidder, and the collectors of them were noted for their covetousness and rapacity; in fact they were justly held in abhorrence by the people. You will perceive that for a Jew thus to be employed was degrading in the highest degree, as it was giving countenance to the galling tyranny of the Romans over the Jews. It will be seen then that the occupation of Matthew,

(1.) Was dishonorable to him as a Jew.

(2.) It was associated with great temptations.

(3.) And it was unfavorable to religion and humanity. Let me ask you before I pass on, what is your occupation? What is your temporal calling? Is it a righteous one? Is it such a one as does not injure society? Can you seek God's blessing upon it? If so, do you follow it lawfully? Do not let it engross your chief affections. Do not let it occupy your sabbaths. Do not let it ruin your souls. Notice,

II. The address of the Saviour. "And Jesus said unto him, Follow me." Now you will observe,

1. *The conciseness of this address.* Two words embody it. The true nature of religion often may be expressed in a single sentence. Repent and believe the gospel. Give yourselves to God. Be ye reconciled to God. "Turn ye, turn ye," &c.

2. *Its comprehensive meaning.* "Follow me." It implies,

(1.) Renunciation of the world and sin

We cannot pursue two opposite courses—cannot serve two masters; we cannot be of the world and of Christ; when he says, "Follow me," he says, Leave the world; forsake sin; keep afar off no longer; it implies,

(2.) Deciding for Christ. So soon as the prodigal came to himself, and stood still, he then said, "I will arise," &c. There may be many changes, yet none of them may be effective. We must resolve to be the Lord's. Decide that we will be Christ's, and he shall be ours.

(3.) Practical obedience to Christ. "Follow me." Listening to his words; sitting at his feet; embracing his truth; imbibing his spirit; imitating his conversation; treading in his steps: in one word, becoming Christians; resembling the Saviour; being humble, self-denying, as Christ was; observing all his precepts and ordinances to do them; being benevolent, and merciful, and pitiful as Christ. Notice then,

III. The conduct of Matthew. "And he arose," &c.

1. *Contrast it with the conduct of many.* Many hear, but hear only; many resolve, but resolve only; many are deeply affected, but are affected only.

2. *Observe the difficulties in the way.*

(1.) He must have been totally indisposed to spiritual things. His habits, pursuits, &c.

(2.) A lucrative employment. He was getting riches; a good business; self-interest at stake.

(3.) The call involved not only the greatest sacrifices, but exposed him to persecution and reproach—to follow Christ into poverty and the hatred of the Jews—to be a disciple of one whom all reviled—to join in his cross and shame—to risk reputation, ease, and life.

3. *Observe how he acted.* "He arose," &c. He resolved, and acted decidedly, and promptly. At once he became a disciple; he conferred not with friends—nor with flesh and blood. He delayed not; he arose, and Matthew the publican became Levi the apostle of Jesus.

4. *See what followed.* He became a disciple of Jesus; a preacher of the gospel; an apostle of the cross; a martyr for the truth. It is supposed he suffered death for his religion, by being pierced with a halbert in Ethiopia, where he had long preached the gospel. In addition, he wrote the gospel which bears his name. We have thus referred you to Matthew who obeyed the call of Jesus, and arose, and followed him.

APPLICATION.

1. *Now Christ is passing by.* He is just saying what he said to Matthew. What do you reply? What is it keeps you back? Why delay?

2. *Now arise and follow Christ.* Cannot be too precipitate in this. Why reason? Why study the matter? Christ says, "Follow me." Who will obey? You, young man? &c. You, old man? &c. Shall it be said of any here, "They arose?" &c.

THE SYRO-PHENICIAN WOMAN.

"Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David," &c.—Matthew xv. 21–28.

Of the blessed Saviour it is written, that he "went about doing good." He came to bless the world, and wherever he went he realized the truth of this declaration. He was eyes to the blind—ears to the deaf—speech to the dumb—health to the sick—joy to the disconsolate—mercy to the guilty—salvation to the lost—and life to the dead. At the time of the Messiah's sojourn upon earth, Satan seemed to have assumed an immense amount of power, and exercised great and despotical control over the bodies as well as the souls of mankind. Hence Jesus was often called to dispossess those who were under the direct and fearful power of the prince of darkness. One of these cases introduces us to the subject of our present discourse. Let us contemplate,

I. The distressed sufferer.
II. The mighty Saviour.
III. The effectual intercessor.
IV. The delightful cure.

I. The distressed sufferer. "Daughter grievously vexed," &c. Several similar cases are revealed to us. There is the case of a youth, whose father came to Christ; the demoniac; Mary Magdalene. So the daughter in the text; under the direct agency of Satan; impelled by his evil

spirit, mind, and body, &c. A young person thus tortured and afflicted; beyond human skill or power to relieve. Let us turn from the sufferer,

II. To THE MIGHTY SAVIOUR. He was sent to destroy the works of the devil; to bruise the head of the serpent; to overthrow the fell usurper; to rescue the world from his iron grasp. He had been typified by Moses, Joshua, Samson, David, &c. Three things favorable to the sufferer:—

1. *That this Saviour was then in the flesh.* She might have lived before Christ's incarnation; before the Shiloh—the Deliverer had come; but the angels had announced, &c.; the Baptist had heralded; the Holy Ghost had descended on him. He had entered on the great work; he had gone forth in all his divine energy, &c.; "mighty to save."

2. *The fame of his power had gone forth.* "Even into the coasts," &c. Four very wondrous cases had been published; the son, who was so torn and cast into the fire, &c.; Mary Magdalene, now a disciple; the restored man, out of whom the legion, &c.; a dumb and blind spirit. Many had come, and by his word the evil spirit had been conquered and dispossessed. The other favorable circumstance was,

3. *That the Saviour was near at hand.* Accessible, verse 21. Entered the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. The promise of the Saviour now ratified; his power and ability tested, and to be near at hand. Oh! happy crisis; important period; golden opportunity; accepted time; "day of salvation."

III. THE EFFECTUAL INTERCESSOR. Here was the afflicted daughter, and the Almighty Saviour. How were they brought together? The mother became the intercessor. Who so suitable? so admirably adapted? What love, what eloquence, what perseverance, and what success, &c. Notice,

1. *The reverence of her address.* She admits him to be the true Messiah; her language involved both his divinity and humanity: "O Lord! thou Son of David."

2. *The petition presented.* "Have mercy upon me." She considered her daughter as herself—her affliction as her own. Who has not felt relative troubles to be more distressing than personal ones? What father? what mother? what friend? &c. "Pity a distressed mother; an afflicted, almost broken-hearted woman." She cried fervently. Mark! her suit is apparently neglected, verse 23. The disciples unite with her; Jesus now apparently excludes her from hope, "I am not sent," &c., verse 24. "He came to his own," &c.

3. *Her prayer is repeated.* She came, and worshipped, and said, "Lord, help me!" One of another nation—one miserable woman. "Lord, help me!" She gave him divine homage. How interesting the scene—how affecting! He then replied, as if to repulse her altogether, "It is not meet to give the children's bread unto the dogs." The Gentiles were so considered by the Jews. He assumes now the distinction of a Jew.

4. *Her plea is reiterated.* "Truth, Lord." "I know, I feel, I admit my inferiority. I am not one of the highly-favored; not a descendant of the illustrious Abraham; not a daughter of Israel. I claim not equality; I contend not for their dignity and privileges; I am willing even to be considered as a dog; let me have the privilege, and it sufficeth." "Yet the dogs," &c. The kind master does not repulse his dog, but allows it to have the crumbs and pieces that would otherwise be wasted. "Have mercy upon me." and spurn not this poor Gentile dog from thy presence. How amazing must all this have been to his disciples! Here is a poor Gentile—a woman: after silence; after an evident refusal; after being reckoned as only a dog, yet she holds fast; she perseveres; she converts an apparent refusal into an argument; and by humility, vehement earnestness, and faith, she retains the attention of the Saviour. But how and wherefore did Christ seem thus to reject her suit? He knew the state of her heart, and he knew his own purpose and intention of granting her what she sought. In this he might design to try her patience; or to excite her desires still more; or to bring forth brighter evidences of her wondrous faith; or that she might be an example to his own disciples, and to all applicants to the end of the world; or to sweeten and add to the preciousness of the boon bestowed. It was not coldness, neglect, or indifference on the part of Christ. Her heart moved not with more earnest desire towards him, than his compassion moved towards her. At length, he allows her to conquer, and to secure her point. Here notice,

IV. The cure obtained. "Oh, woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee," &c. Observe,

1. *He extols the successful pleader.* "Great is thy faith." It does not first appear that this was the reigning, triumphant grace. Might he not have said, Marvellous is thy self-abasement, thy humility, thy fervency, thy firmness and perseverance, thy love to thy child, thy resolve not to depart without the blessing? But in all this faith was the root, the main-spring, the active vital power of her soul. This brought her to Christ; this caused her to honor and worship Christ; to plead—to parry the thrusts—to put up with the silence—to argue the whole matter. "Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees," &c.

2. *He grants all that she sought.* "Be it unto thee as thou wilt." Faith takes hold of Christ's strength; faith restrains the wrath of God. Thus he cried to Moses, "Let me alone." It holds him fast, so that he cannot go till the blessing is given. Faith brings virtue out of Christ, though it touches but the hem of his garment. "All things are possible," &c. Her daughter was healed—the devil was ejected—and she was perfectly restored. Oh, happy child! Oh, wonderful mother! Oh, almighty and gracious Saviour! This subject addresses,

(1.) Parents and heads of families—on the duty they owe to the children under their charge.

(2.) The Christian church—on the solicitude they should evince for the religious instruction and welfare of the rising generation.

(3.) Sabbath school teachers—on the importance of leading those whom they instruct to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only source of spiritual health and salvation.

BETHESDA.

(A CHAPEL-OPENING SKETCH.)

"Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches."—John v 2.

Our text contains the name of a very interesting place in Jerusalem; a place of very great celebrity and importance to the afflicted inhabitants of that city; a place which would live in the associations and recollections of the multitude who had there found healing and temporal happiness; and a place of much anxiety to the infirm and afflicted. Every particular is given by the evangelist in the brief paragraph of which the text forms a part; read verses 2 to 4. Then there is given the history of an afflicted person, who had long been waiting to enjoy its marvellous influences; see verses 5 to 7. On him Christ had compassion, verse 8; an instantaneous cure was wrought, verse 9. We desire at this time to call your attention to a three-fold view of Bethesda:—

I. As exhibiting a striking representation of the Levitical economy.

II. As being totally superseded by the glorious dispensation of the gospel.

III. As being peculiarly appropriate to the present occasion.

I. As exhibiting a striking representation of the Levitical economy. Observe, Bethesda was really worthy of the title it possessed. It was, indeed, a house of mercy; the removal of the infirmities of the body. The features of resemblance between Bethesda and the Levitical economy are chiefly these:—

1. *It was local.* The Levitical economy was the religion of Judea; it was associated especially with Palestine, and more immediately still with Jerusalem. Its worship, its priesthood, and its rites were designed for one circumscribed locality. This Bethesda—the house of mercy—was one small pool, limited to one locality in Jerusalem.

2. *It was limited as well as local.* At Bethesda only the first of the multitudes waiting was healed; so the benefits of Judaism were limited to one nation, including a few proselytes of other countries. The wide world was without the range; myriads of mankind strangers to its light and blessings.

3. *Its privileges and blessings were only occasional.* "At certain seasons." Numerous and long intervals between; just so that dispensation. Its ordinances were numerous, but its great rites and chief festivals were very occasional. Its great feasts three times a year; grand jubilee only every fifty years; a minor one, or sabbatical year, every seven; only one day of national expiation; one annual sacrifice.

4. *It was connected with waiting and expectation.* Here numbers were collected, and they had to look forward to, and wait for, the troubling of the waters, &c. Just such was the Levitical economy. It was one of waiting and expectation. Prophecies were given, but they had to wait for their realization; promises made, but their fulfilment was future. They had many offerings, and ceremonial institutions, but their sacrifices could not wash away sin.

"Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain."

Thus the patriarchs and prophets looked and longed for the gospel day, but died in faith, and without the actual sight.

5. *It was not distinguished for pre-eminent benevolence.* Here was a helpless, friendless person; but no one felt sufficient interest to give him a place during the troubling of the waters. We do not say that goodness and mercy had no place in the old economy; assuredly they had, but they were not the chief and prominent glories of that dispensation. It was more an economy of law and justice than of compassion and mercy. Such are the features of resemblance. Notice, then,

II. THE JEWISH BETHESDA, AS BEING TOTALLY SUPERSEDED BY THE GLORIOUS DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL. Christ appeared, and dispensed with the pool. The Church of Christ may well and appositely be styled the House of Mercy. It is so in the truest and most exalted sense of the term. It is associated with a *fountain* which has been opened for sin, &c. Now, the healing fountain of divine grace totally eclipses the glory of the ancient Levitical economy, as well as supersedes the Jerusalem Bethesda. Observe, this is,

1. *Universal, not local.* Not confined to Jerusalem, or Palestine, or the Jews. It exists everywhere, where the gospel is preached. It is acceptable to the whole world, and to every creature.

"Its streams the whole creation reach,
So plenteous is the store;
Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough for evermore."

2. *Its blessings are ever accessible, and not occasional.* Every year a jubilee; every day a sabbath; every moment one of expiation; every instant one of mercy.

3. *Its blessings are present, and not in prospect.* There are, indeed, blessings in prospect; but pardon,—remission of sin,—justification,—holiness,—peace,—adoption, are all now presented. "This is the acceptable time,"&c. "The word is nigh thee," &c.

4. *It is emphatically a dispensation of love and mercy.* Grace and truth, love and embodied goodness, came by Jesus Christ, fully, gloriously, universally; and these it teaches. The disciples of Christ are constrained by this love to love the souls of those around. Such then, brethren, are some of the glories of the gospel dispensation, which entirely supersedes the Mosaical economy, and the Bethesda at Jerusalem. But there is,

III. ANOTHER APPLICATION OF THE TEXT PECULIARLY APPROPRIATE TO THE PRESENT OCCASION. May not every house erected for the preaching of the gospel, and the celebration of the ordinances of Christ, be styled "Bethesda," the House of Mercy? We ask,

1. *For whom, and to whom, is this house erected and consecrated?* To the God of mercy; to him who delighteth in mercy. Here you record his name—celebrate his praise—proclaim his glory—and here he will surely come and bless you. Here his glory shall be seen. Hearken! "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion better than all," &c.

2. *For what great purpose is this house to be devoted?* The proclamation of mercy; the rich, universal mercy of God, as flowing in the streams of the gospel; mercy to the guilty, wretched outcasts of mankind; mercy to all who need it; mercy to all who will receive it.

3. *May we not hopefully anticipate that here effusions of mercy will be enjoyed?* Who can tell how many sinners shall enjoy that promise, "Let the wicked," &c. How many penitents shall here meet the mercy promised to their fathers? How many backsliders shall here feel the application of restoring mercy? When the Lord shall say, "I will heal your backslidings; I will love you freely; for my anger is turned away." How many of the people of God shall come here, that with boldness they may approach the throne of grace?

4. *Shall not the monuments of mercy here celebrate the riches of mercy from time to time?* Oh! how delightful to contemplate brands plucked from the fire; rebels soft-

ened by divine love; prodigals accepted of their father; all meeting, and all uniting. "O Lord! we will praise thee; for, though thou wast angry," &c.

5. *I ask, finally, shall not a spirit of mercy distinguish the friends of Jesus who dwell within these walls?* As the elect of God, will not they possess bowels of mercy? Will they not exhibit the mercifulness of Jesus in their spirit, and conversation, and conduct? Will they not manifest the fruits of mercy in their lives, and thus "show forth the praises of him," &c. How desirable that at the opening services,

1. That divine mercy might be experienced by some soul as a token for good—as a kind of first-fruit. Who will be the person? Who feels his need? Who will seek, and ask, and believe?

2. Let the mercy of the Lord be the song of his redeemed people. "Oh! magnify the Lord," &c.

3. Let your generosity evince that you are deeply sensible of your obligations to the mercy of God, and that you long for his mercy to be enjoyed by others.

THE RESTORED DEMONIAC

"Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him."—Luke viii. 38, 39.

Our text relates to the man who had been rescued from the legion of devils. His condition was now totally reversed; restored to reason and happiness, we are called to see him at the feet of the Saviour, &c. After this we are referred to two prayers offered up to Jesus; the one by the Gadarenes, a most awful instance of ignorance, selfishness, and infatuation, "that Christ would depart from them," &c. This prayer Christ answered by immediately retiring from their coast; then there is the prayer of the recovered demoniac, a prayer exceedingly proper and interesting, &c. How different to the other, "Now the man out of whom," &c. In the text we have,

I. An interesting prayer, which notwithstanding was rejected. Now look,

1. *At the prayer itself.* "To be with Christ." Was not this the end of Christ's mission, that he might collect souls to himself? Gather them out of the world, &c. Had he not taught, "If any man will be my disciple," &c. It seems evidently a wise and proper prayer; a pious prayer, the sign of a gracious state of soul. Consider,

2. *The probable reasons by which this prayer was dictated.* It might be the result,

(1.) Of holy cautiousness and fear. He had just been dispossessed of a legion of spirits. "A stronger than they," &c. But might they not again overcome him? &c. How natural and proper then to fear; how proper to desire to be near the deliverer, &c.

(2.) It might arise also from grateful love to Jesus; his position how interesting, at Christ's feet; he would cling to that spot; his heart was entwined around that of the Saviour; he knew not how to express his love and gratitude to Jesus.

(3.) It might arise from a desire to know more of Christ; he could not be satisfied with a few minutes, he wished to be his pupil, his personal adherent, his disciple and follower. Notice,

3. *The refusal of this request.* "But Christ sent him away." However wise, and proper, and pious the man's petition appears, Jesus determined and directed otherwise; his suit could not be granted. Now, here let us pause, and learn,

(1.) How necessary to be taught rightly to pray. We know not what we should pray for; Peter prayed on the mountain of transfiguration, that they might build tabernacles, &c. James and John that they might sit, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Paul prayed thrice that the thorn in the flesh, &c. Lord, teach us how to pray! When we have not express direction and promise we must refer all to the will of God.

(2.) We should learn to be satisfied with the Lord's good pleasure, whether he grants our requests or not. "He is too wise to err, too good to be unkind." He loves us too well to neglect our best interests, our real welfare. Observe,

II. An important command which was piously obeyed. "Jesus sent him," &c.

1. *Let us look at the nature of the command.* To return to his own house and show, &c. He was to be a personal witness for Christ; a monument of Christ's power and Christ's compassion. He could testify,

(1.) To the enthronement of reason. He had been beside himself, irrational; now he was intelligent, cool, reflecting.

(2.) To emancipation from the thraldom of evil spirits; released from the power of the devil.

(3.) To restoration to happiness. No longer cutting himself, a wretched outcast, but clothed and happy, &c. Then, in testifying he would have to refer,

(4.) To the author of his deliverance. "Jesus." The compassion and power of Christ. Now, let the happy saved believer apply the remarks to himself; you can testify in like manner, and to the same things. Observe,

2. *The obedience which was rendered.* "And he went his way," &c.

(1.) It was prompt and immediate. He did not cavil, nor reason, nor refuse.

(2.) It was decided and public. "Wherever he went," &c. "How great things," &c. Not afraid, nor ashamed.

APPLICATION.

1. *The end of our conversion is more than our own salvation.*

(1.) We must testify to and for the benefit of others.

(2.) We must glorify Christ. Show forth his praises, his compassion and power.

2. *The converted should not consult merely their own comfort.* But deny themselves for Christ's sake; not to be indifferent to ourselves, yet to take up our cross, &c.

3. *Christian obedience is unquestioning and exact.* To do as the Lord enjoins; just in the Lord's way. Soul entirely submissive to God.

4. *The heart's desires of the saints shall be granted in a future state.* Be with Jesus forever, &c.

THE RECOVERED LEPER.

"And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them."—MATTHEW viii. 2–4.

ONE of the results of sin is the fearful catalogue of bodily diseases which it has introduced. Man was formed free from affliction, sorrow, and pain, neither was he liable to death; but sin has filled the world with sickness and misery. Hence,

"Fierce diseases wait around,
To hurry mortals home."

Every part of the body is alike vulnerable, alike in danger, alike susceptible of affliction and agony; some are tedious in their progress, and men groan beneath them for years; others are rapid in their course, and speedily cast their victims into the gloomy grave; some are curable, while others defy the physician's art, and medicine's power. During Christ's mission on earth he employed his benevolent power in healing the diseases both of body and mind. Our text refers to one delightful instance, to which we invite your attention on the present occasion. Consider,

I. THE INDIVIDUAL REFERRED TO. "A leper." Perhaps no condition was more truly awful and distressing; leprosy was common in Palestine, and is so still in various parts of the east; at present we shall consider it as exhibiting a striking representation of sin, the leprosy of the soul. Now leprosy,

1. *Was generally hereditary.* Thus from Adam and Eve, sin has spread into every country, and down through every generation. Men are not only born under the effects of the guilt of sin, but under its depraving and defiling power.

2. *It was small in its first appearance.* A small spot on the countenance of an inflamed red character was the first sign; those unacquainted with it might suspect no danger. Now sin is little in its beginning; look at children in their tempers, &c.; look at individuals who at one period were amiable, and have become thoroughly vile.

3. *It was deep-seated and inveterate in its nature.* The heart and blood are under its influence: so with sin, the heart is the seat, the soul is the spring and root of all the evil.

4. *It was universal in its prevalence.* All the man affected. From the head through all the extremities. No part of a leper clean; so with sin and the sinner, "the whole head," &c. All the faculties of the soul; all the senses of the body, &c.

5. *It was very loathsome in its appearance.* The eyes and countenance assumed a horrid and disgusting appearance, painful, and it rendered the person a burden to

himself, and life itself a curse: such also is sin; it renders man abominable to God and holy angels, and fills him with anguish and misery.

6. *It excluded from society, and rendered them objects of terror to all around.* However united by the ties of kindredness, their breath was dreaded, it was the breath of disease, to touch them was to receive their malady; not allowed to mix with the healthy, or to go into the congregation of the Lord. Travellers feared to meet them, &c.: so sin infests and excludes from the family and presence of God.

7. *It was incurable by human power, and generally produced a most awful death.* It raged until the whole person became one mass of foulness and pollution; then the vital organs being powerfully attacked, death terminated the career of suffering: such also is the leprosy of the soul; no man can recover himself from it; no created power can restore; it never cures itself. "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." Such was the condition of the man who applied to Christ. Notice,

II. His address to the Redeemer. "Lord, if thou wilt," &c.

1. *It was an address of humble respect.* "Lord." He acknowledged him as a dignified person; received him as the Messiah, worshipped, &c.

2. *It was associated with faith.* "Thou canst." Not ordinary faith. He would not have said so to any other person on earth. Christ had the power, and this was the power of God.

3. *It contained an affecting reference to his own misery and Christ's goodness.* "If thou wilt thou canst make me clean." Nothing so important to him as this; this was his heart's desire; he appealed to Christ's disposition. "If thou wilt," &c.

III. The conduct of the Saviour.

1. *Christ responded to his appeal.* And said, "I will." "His love is as great as his power," &c. Christ's willingness is established on the most immoveable truths and facts.

2. *His word was omnipotent, and conveyed the healing power.* He might have willed it, and effected it silently, but he spake, &c.; so he did in creation, so in all his miracles. At the grave of Lazarus—to the devils who possessed the demoniac—to the raging sea, &c.

3. *He put forth his hand to testify to his cleanness.* A touch would infect, and in any case ceremonially defile; but Jesus now touched him to show that the foul disease was gone. What a cure! How complete! How instantaneous! How free! How precious!

4. *He sent him to the priest that his recovery might be duly attested.* The priest was appointed of God to testify when a person was cleansed and fit for society. Now this case might have been disputed, &c. He was to go at once for fear the priest might hear, and through prejudice refuse to attest, &c.

5. *He was to present a gift unto the Lord.* See Levit. xiv. 10, and if poor, verse 21. Now Christ enforced this to show that he came to fulfil all the law, &c.; and to elicit a grateful spirit from the leper. Now let me turn to the leprous sinner.

1. *See how you are to obtain healing and purity.* From Christ; by personal, humble, and believing application to him.

2. *See the way in which Christ will receive you.* He will freely and graciously deliver; he desires to do this, &c. He can do it now, &c.

3. *See what Christ expects from those he has healed.* Dedication of yourselves and all you have to the Lord.

APPLICATION.

1. Bless God for health of body.

2. Especially be anxious for health of soul.

3. Praise God for the Almighty Saviour and the means of spiritual health and felicity.

4. We now invite all to be healed.

FAITH THE ANTIDOTE TO FEAR.

"Be not afraid, only believe."—Mark v. 36.

Our text is connected with one of the Saviour's most resplendent miracles. The ruler's daughter was sick; her father, full of anguish, applies to Jesus. His application was reverential, "for he fell at Christ's feet," &c., verse 22; his application was most importunate, "And besought him greatly," verse 23; his application evinced great parental tenderness, "My little daughter lieth at the point of death;" his application was connected with strong faith, "Come and lay thy hands &c., and she

shall live," verse 23. Before Jesus arrived, word came from the ruler's house saying his daughter was dead, verse 35. It was then that Christ addressed to him the words of our text; the sequel is well known. He exerted his mighty power, and brought her back into the land of the living. A more difficult case could not be well conceived of; yet living faith and the power of Christ were adequate to it—and to every possible exigency they are equally adapted. Let us look at some cases wherein the text may be appropriately applied. Observe its applicability to the anxious inquirer; to the conflicting believer; to tried Christians; to the spiritual laborer; to the dying saint. We apply the text,

I. To the anxious inquirer. To the individual convinced of sin—alarmed with apprehensions of wrath—trembling for fear of the devouring wrath of Deity. It may be that the sins of the convicted penitent have been enormous; aggravated; of long continuance; red as scarlet; or deeply stained as crimson. Such may see how ordinary transgressors may be saved; but they view their own state as extreme, desperate, and perhaps hopeless. Now, what shall I say to such a one? what instance present? what direction afford? Shall we refer to some preparatory work? shall we keep them back for a time from the grand remedy? shall we urge a series of external reformations? Oh! no; the deeper the guilt and misery, and the more necessitous the case, the more eager we should be to bring it at once to the great remedy. The fears of such may be most terrific; but we exclaim with all possible earnestness, "Be not afraid, only believe." Believe the incomprehensible vastness of the divine love and mercy, "As the heavens are higher," &c. Believe the readiness of God to save the greatest of transgressors, "As I live," &c. "Come, and let us reason," &c. Believe the infinite efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, "The blood of Jesus Christ," &c. "This is a faithful saying," &c. Believe that your salvation is to be a matter of entire grace, the free gift of God, "Not by works of righteousness," &c. "By grace are ye saved," &c. Believe that God is waiting, &c., solicitous to save you, "For whosoever will come," &c. "Him that cometh," &c. "O that thou, even thou, hadst known," &c. Believe, and all the gracious promises of God become your own; believe, and all the virtue of Christ's merit and power will be exerted for your benefit:

> "Believe, and all your sin's forgiven;
> Only believe, and yours is heaven."

We apply the text,

II. To the conflicting believer. The life of the believer is a state of conflict; it is a course of moral wrestling, "We wrestle not," &c.; it is a course of contention, "Contend earnestly," &c.; a warfare, "War a good warfare," &c. Now, in this conflicting state, our enemies are very numerous, malevolent, and persevering in their assaults. We read of the "fiery darts of the devil." To be harassed with these foes incessantly, may damp the ardor and chill the enjoyments of the believer. He may be discouraged on account of the way, &c. Now, what is our advice to the conflicting believer? Philosophize—reason—be resolute—rely on the goodness of your cause? &c. No; it is, "only believe." Faith is your shield; by it you will quench all the fiery darts, &c. Faith will enable you to wield the sword of the Spirit, &c.; faith kept in lively exercise, and devils will fear and tremble; a believing application of God's word, and we successfully overcome the army of the aliens. We apply the text,

III. To the tried Christian. This is a state of probationary trial; sorrows and troubles form a great portion of our inventory; in the world, we shall, we must have tribulation. Now, what shall we do in these trials? Murmur, repine, become dispirited; or sink into inactivity and gloom? Oh! no; our text is the antidote, "Only believe." Hear David—"I had fainted unless I had believed," &c. Hearken to Jesus—"Let not your hearts be troubled," &c. Paul—"I know whom," &c. Believe these troubles are under divine direction or control; believe they are not tokens of wrath, but of love; believe that they are really light and transitory; believe they will conform to Christ, and enhance future blessedness; only believe, and then you may truly sing, "In darkest shades, if he appear," &c. We apply the text,

IV. To the spiritual laborer. You are anxious to please and serve God, by the practical dedication of your power and talents to his glory. In the school, training

up the young, you are discouraged; but believe what God has spoken, and obey his word. "In the morning sow thy seed." In laboring to save your neighbors, &c., but so thoughtless, &c. Believe that your labor cannot be in vain; how many have succeeded. Let faith nerve you afresh. Believe in the wisdom and goodness of these efforts, "He that winneth souls," &c. "He that converteth a sinner," &c. In raining up your families: perhaps some of your children "sons of Belial;" all dark and gloomy; no signs of grace. Let faith lead you to enforce scriptural tuition and discipline, and rest on that word, "Train up a child," &c. In working in the church you do not see any good arise; nor your ability to increase it; feel as cumberers of the ground, &c. Have you fervently prayed? have you pleaded with God? are you deeply anxious for the revival of religion? You cannot tell but God's blessing may have rested on the minister—on his word, &c., through your faith. Be not dispirited, use the means, and "only believe." We apply the text,

V. To THE DYING SAINT. That solemn crisis of death must be personally known by every one. To a dying saint, we would not say, "Remember your past excellent life, your long profession of religion, your rich and mellowed experience." Oh! no; we say even now, as at first, your salvation is of faith. To die safely, happily, triumphantly, you must die in faith. "Only believe." Believe in the fidelity of your God; believe in the presence of your Saviour; believe that sin is atoned for; that death is subdued; that the grave has been hallowed; that the gates of paradise have been flung wide open; that Christ has prepared mansions of blessedness for you; waits to receive you to himself, &c. Believe, and pass confidently through the valley, &c.; believe, and plunge into the swellings of Jordan; believe, and grapple with your last enemy. Hark! the conflict is over; the saint is victorious. He exclaims, "O death! where is thy sting?" &c.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. *See the reason why we are counselled only to believe.*

(1.) Faith is the first great exercise of the soul; that which unites us to God; that which builds on the good foundation.

(2.) Faith is ever accompanied by the other graces of the Spirit. It works by love; it inspires hope; it produces Christian diligence. "The work of faith."

(3.) Faith makes all that is in God ours—the Father, Son, and Spirit. It appropriates the whole Deity; it interests us in the entire Godhead; and honors all his persons and attributes.

2. *Observe the general and perpetual appropriation of the text.* To all states and circumstances in life. It is never out of place; never unseasonable; ever proper, right, necessary, and efficacious.

3. *Ascertain if this faith is exemplified in your experience.*

THE CENTURION AND HIS SERVANT

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him." &c.—MATTHEW viii. 5–10.

HERE we are presented with an account of one of Christ's illustrious and gracious miracles; one of those signs of goodness and power, which compelled Nicodemus to exclaim, "Rabbi, we know," &c. One astounding miracle he had just wrought, in cleansing the poor miserable leper, and then he entered into Capernaum, when he was addressed by a centurion, who came, and beseeching him, said, "Lord, my servant," &c. Notice,

I. THE APPLICANT. He was a centurion; that is, an officer having the command of one hundred soldiers. In many respects, we may be justly astonished that such an individual should be found drawing near to the Saviour. Let us glance at some of these particulars.

1. *He was a Gentile, and not of the house of Israel.* In this respect, he had not possessed the national privileges of the Jews; he had originally been involved in the darkness of paganism; his first impressions had been unfavorable to religion. Our education, the national and family privileges are of the greatest worth, and deserve our gratitude; we are also responsible for them.

2. *His profession was unfavorable to piety.* He was a military man. Few positions in life are more unfriendly to godliness. It is eminently a worldly profession; it is based on ambition and worldly glory; it is opposed to humanity and goodness;

there is little time for reflection. Now, it appears that this centurion had become attached to the Jewish religion, and most likely was a proselyte to their faith; for it is said, Luke vii. 5, "that he loved their nation, and had built for them a synagogue." Such was the applicant. Notice,

II. THE SUIT HE PRESENTED. Several things in this deserve our attention.

1. *The object of his suit.* "His servant." Many had applied to Christ on their own account; some on behalf of their relatives; as the ruler's daughter; father for his son; Peter's wife's mother, &c.; but here is a master seeking the restoration of his servant. Piety renders every station in life a blessing. It makes good parents, good children, good masters, good servants. It is highly probable that his servant had been a faithful, devoted one; thus he had secured the esteem and affection of his master. We read of several distinguished servants in the word of God. There was the excellent servant of Abraham, and the servants of Naaman, &c. What an example to masters and mistresses; what a contrast to the condition of many! How benevolent, and tender, and solicitous!

2. *The way in which he presented it.*

(1.) There was personal exertion. He came to Jesus; he employed his time and personal influence.

(2.) He was earnest in his application. "Beseeching him." Not cold and formal, but with anxious earnestness and ardor.

(3.) He displayed great reverence and humility, "Lord," &c. He assumed nothing on account of his station. When Christ complied, he answered, "I am not worthy," &c. What self-abasement! What exalted views of Christ! What a pattern!

(4.) He manifested extraordinary faith. He said, "Thy journey is not necessary," "but speak the word," &c. Thy mandate is enough; thou art Lord of all; a word will answer the mighty end, &c. He illustrated it himself by referring to his authority, verse 9. Notice,

III. THE SUCCESS HE EXPERIENCED.

1. *He was honored by the Saviour.* "When Jesus heard it, he marvelled," &c. What a contrast to the conduct of the scribes and Pharisees; to the Jews in general. Even to his own disciples, Christ pronounced this honorable distinction, "I say unto you," &c. Here confession was praised, humility exalted, and faith applauded, by the Son of God.

2. *His servant was healed;* Luke vii. 10. Here we see the result of pious, benevolent influence. The master a blessing to the servant, &c.; one the channel of good to the other, "I will bless thee and make thee a blessing."

APPLICATION.

1. *Admire this example of human excellency.* Christ did so, and honored it. Let us do so, and imitate it.

2. *See the grace and power of the Saviour.* How all-sufficient and infinitely merciful. His word is enough.

3. *Let all believers exert their influence for the good of others.* You have influence as well as the centurion. Prayer—faith—access to Christ; exert it. Have you not relatives? servants? neighbors? It is your duty, and your real advantage to do so. Do it in the closet; do it in the family; do it in the congregation of the saints. Let us all admire and feel as the centurion did, and go and do likewise.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

SKETCH I.

"And he said, A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living," &c —LUKE xv. 11, &c.

THIS is one of the Saviour's beautiful and interesting parables. It is impossible to read it without being struck with the true picture it draws, the graphic imagery with which it abounds, and the nervous, yet simple language in which it is written. The occasion of the parable is found in the first and second verses of the chapter. Two minor parables precede and appropriately introduce it—the lost sheep, and the piece of money. It is not the design of the Spirit that the filling up of the parable should, of necessity, be spiritualized, and made to support the great end the parable was to answer. Three great lessons are evidently taught;—the depravity of the sinner and its results; the hardening and lamentable consequences of a sinful life; and the nature of true repentance, with its happy effects. At present we shall dwell on the first of these, and by a series of proposi-

tions grounded on the text endeavor to present the subject clearly to your minds.

I. ONE OF THE EVIDENCES OF A DEPRAVED AND SINFUL STATE, IS TO THROW OFF THE DIVINE AUTHORITY AND RESTRAINT. Sin thus commenced in our world. Our first parents desired to be as gods, and broke through the restrictions in reference to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus the prodigal is described as impatient —restless and anxious to escape his father's cognizance—to leave the paternal roof; to think, and choose, and act as he pleased. Thus to feel and act is the essence of sin. A loyal subject does not desire to conduct himself without respect to the constitution and laws of the land. A good child does not despise parental authority. A faithful servant desires not to act according to his own pleasure. Holy spirits do the will of God, and they are perfectly happy to be regulated by Deity. But sin rejects God's authority, bursts through his restraints, and sets up the rebel desires of the soul against God and his word.

II. GOD GIVES A PORTION OF HIS BOUNTIES EVEN TO THE WICKED AND UNGODLY. "Give me the portion," &c. Every created thing has its portion from God. Men, as the creatures of God, enjoy many blessings from the Most High. There is life with all its privileges; health, and physical comfort; reason and mental endowments; natural gifts, and talents; to some riches and influence; many privileges and opportunities of improvement, &c. A portion full of goodness and mercy.

III. A STATE OF SIN IS ONE OF DEPARTURE FROM GOD. He took his journey. Sin is forsaking God, departing from his ways. Sin creates moral distance between the soul and Jehovah. It does so as it respects his *favor*. He cannot approve, &c. His face is against the wicked. Angry, &c. His *image*,—it effaces it, &c. Every faculty suffers,—understanding,—judgment,—conscience,—affections,—desires, &c. His *family*. It excludes—drives out—separates from his holy dwelling. Sin is travelling from, not towards heaven. Wandering towards the blackness, &c., of hell. It is the way of death. By a course of sin, this state of distance is constantly increasing, widening, &c. The Christian is daily journeying nearer and nearer towards heaven: the sinner, &c., towards the abodes of eternal despair.

IV. THE PRACTICE OF SIN IS ONE OF PERVERSION AND WASTE OF THE BLESSINGS OF HEAVEN. "Wasted," &c. Sin seeketh the sacrifice of all. Health and strength, &c. The sinner wastes—wealth, and influence. The one sin of drunkenness costs this country fifty million pounds sterling of our national means. Faculties—talents, &c.—life itself, and the solemn capabilities of the soul. Sin often destroys all; ruins the whole.

V. SIN IS PECULIARLY DEBASING TO ITS VICTIMS. The son now a slave. The rich son now poor. The son of a noble family now a swineherd. How it degrades! how it sinks its possessors! It casts the crown of excellency from the head. It takes the robe of beauty, &c. It often affects the countenance—the face divine, and stamps the features with infamy and degradation. How many has it shut up in prison—the penal settlements. The great majority of criminals are the dissipated, abandoned, young.

VI. SIN IS OFTEN PRODUCTIVE OF UTTER WRETCHEDNESS TO BOTH BODY AND MIND. Hear the prodigal—his exclamation, "I perish with hunger." He fain would have filled himself with the husks, "the fruit of the carib tree," in shape resembling the large scarlet bean. His remuneration was not sufficient to satisfy his hunger, &c. And the swine were better fed than he. How truly is this often experienced in the circumstances that sin produces! The evils of its effects are truly legion, for they are many—temporal—domestic—mental—and those of the conscience and spirit.

VII. SINNERS IN THEIR MISERY ARE SELDOM BEFRIENDED BY THOSE AROUND THEM. No man gave the prodigal "husks." Where are his companions who assisted him to spend his portion? See the gambler, the pleasure-taker, the drunkard. How they all become friendless in their adversity, sickness, &c. Self seeks its own, and fawns and flatters in prosperity, but frowns and forsakes in adversity.

APPLICATION.

1. Many can read their own experience in the text.

2. Let the young ponder it well.

3. It may instruct and admonish all.

The condition described is wretched, indeed, but not hopeless. Light will break forth on our next subject.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

SKETCH II.

"And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me," &c.—LUKE xv. 11, &c.

IN our last discourse we contemplated the prodigal throwing off the paternal authority and restraint, claiming his share of the family portion, leaving his home and departing into a far country, spending all he had in profligacy and riotous living, reduced to a situation the most degrading and wretched, forsaken by all, and ready to die of want. Our present subject leads us to consider,

I. THAT A SINFUL CONDITION IS ONE OF INFATUATION AND MADNESS. "When he came to himself." That is, when he paused, considered, reflected, acted as a rational creature. One chief cause of continued sin, is inconsideration. Men will not know—do not consider. Passion reigns and rules. Would a man exchange home for exile—plenty for famine—a robe for rags—dignity for servile degradation—comfort for wretchedness? Yet all sinners act thus. They give gold for tinsel—bread for husks—gratifying the body at the expense of the soul. The moment of pleasure is preferred to the realities of eternity. Madness is want of judgment; and is not sin? Madness is rashness; and is not sin? Madness is acting without regard to reason, and not consulting the proper end of existence, &c. Look at the superiority of the mere animal creatures as answering the end of their existence, Isa. i. 3; Jer. viii. 6, 7.

II. THAT AFFLICTION IS SOMETIMES THE MEANS OF PRODUCING SERIOUSNESS AND REFLECTION. Just perishing! The exclamation showed his state. "I perish with hunger." We say affliction *sometimes* is the means of conversion, not always. Many leave the furnace harder and more reprobate. Many curse God and die. But there are instances of the reverse—similar to that of the prodigal. There was the wicked, blood-thirsty Manasseh, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12. The proud, imperious Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iv. 33, 34. Happy is it when adversity and affliction lead to consideration and repentance. No doubt there are some instances of this kind here. Some have lost a child—a parent—a friend—have been brought to the verge of the tomb, &c., and thus led to humiliation, and penitency, and prayer.

III. GENUINE REPENTANCE IS RETRACING OUR STEPS TO THE GOD WHOM WE HAVE FORSAKEN. Repentance signifies change of mind. "I think differently, I feel differently, I will act differently. I thought it best to be without restraint; not so now. I thought it best to leave my home, &c., to be the companion of profligates, to give myself to rioting. My mind is entirely altered—changed. My course shall now be the reverse. I will go back—cease to do evil, learn to do well." This is repentance, and nothing else. It always changes the conduct—changes the life. "Let the wicked man forsake his wickedness," &c. It will ever be accompanied with shame. "What fruit had ye," &c. Sorrow, keen regret, a sense of self-condemnation. The repenting sinner needs none to condemn him. He writes by far the most bitter things against himself. Overwhelmed with a sense of his ingratitude, he feels sin has injured himself—society—and offended his God. He beholds what he has forfeited, verse 17.

IV. THAT DETERMINATE RESOLUTION IS NECESSARY TO GENUINE REPENTANCE. He considers, reflects, perceives the only alternative, and then he resolves; "I will arise and go," &c. Many desire, many purpose, but yet do not *resolve*. There must be decision, determination;—this is indispensable. But it is not every resolution that is effectual.

1. *It must arise as much from a sense of the evil of sin as a fear of its punishment.* The one feeling is entirely selfish and carnal. I dread the death, but do not hate the crime, &c. But the prodigal felt that he had "sinned," that he was unworthy, &c.

2. *It must be made with a full conviction of our own weakness, and relying on God's aid.* Many have resolved presumptuously, self-righteously, and have failed. These must fail. To know our helplessness is essential;—that we can do nothing, and then God will be trusted, relied on: we must rest all *here*, "Thy grace is sufficient," &c. The Lord's help, &c.

3. *Hence it must be accompanied by earnest prayer.* God's aid must be implored, and that fervently; with all the intensity of a person in deep distress.

"Beware of Peter's word,
Nor confidently say,
I never will deny thee, Lord,
But grant I never may."

4. *The best resolutions must be promptly acted upon.* Carried out; and immediately. If we delay, the impression will vanish; if we delay, the ardor will subside, the enemy gain strength. It must be brought to the present tense; now, this day, this season, this evening, this moment.

> "I must this instant now begin
> Out of my sin t'awake;
> And turn to God, and every sin
> Continually forsake."

Thus acted the prodigal, and thus must we act, to enjoy God's favor, and obtain salvation. Now, by how many reasons may this be enforced on all unconverted sinners present! We shall confine ourselves to the following.

(1.) Have we not sufficiently felt the misery of our present state to desire deliverance? Is not a sinful state wretched, degrading, perilous? We cannot doubt the necessity of immediate extrication.

(2.) Is there not ample provision, even for prodigals, in their Father's house, if they repent? The least and the lowliest in Christ's family is infinitely better off than we are. "Better be a door-keeper," &c. "Hired servants," &c. Better be a dog to have the falling crumbs, &c.

(3.) There is but one way of access to that home. By repentance; by going and casting ourselves on his mercy; by venturing on his goodness and compassion.

(4.) No time so suitable or so sure as the present. Who then will arise? who will take the first step to-night? Is there not some young person? some head of a family or aged person? We entreat you to weigh, ponder, and now resolve. The prodigal is now on his way back. His reception and restoration we must postpone until our next discourse.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

SKETCH III.

"A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me," &c. —LUKE xv. 11, &c.

WE have previously contemplated the prodigal leaving his father's house; spending his portion in riotous living; reduced to want, degradation, and misery. We have also witnessed the happy change which took place in his mind; the important pause; the noble resolve; the feelings of repentance and genuine sorrow which he experienced; and the prompt manner in which he began to retrace his steps. At this part of the parable, we must recommence our observations, "And he arose," &c.

I. OBSERVE THE ASPECT OF THE REPENTING SINNER. He is now moving towards his father's house. How different his appearance,

1. *To what it was when he abandoned his home.* Then, invested with the riches of his portion; clothed in the costume belonging to his rank; a retinue of servants; a host of professed friends. Now poor—in rags—alone—ready to perish. Yet how different,

2. *To that part of his history, when he was wasting his substance.* Look at his recklessness, profligacy; look at his company; hear the mad mirth; witness the scenes of dissipation. But, alas! it was the way of ruin—the carnival of death; the victim was fitting for the slaughter. But now he is alone—thoughtful—reflecting—serious—journeying homeward; and, notwithstanding his wretched condition, he is in the way of life and salvation. We observe, that such a difference will always be seen where genuine repentance is experienced. No conversion without such an entire change. We remark,

II. GOD SEES REPENTING SINNERS IN THE FIRST MOVEMENTS OF THEIR HEARTS AND LIVES TOWARDS HIM; verse 20. "When he was a great way off," &c. Yes; as if he had been looking out for his return. He beheld him at a great distance, and knew him. The first gracious motions of the heart are known by the Lord. That serious thought; that keen pang of regret; that contrite groan; that resolution of amendment; that sigh for happiness. He is in a merciful position, seeking the return of the sinful, wandering soul.

III. GOD HASTENS TO MEET THE CONTRITE PENITENT. He saw, had compassion, and "ran," &c. Observe these three points:—

1. *He beheld our misery*—our return from the way of rebellion, and did not feel the spirit of stern, inflexible righteousness, but the movings of love and pity.

2. *His compassion prevailed.* "Had compassion." Nothing else would serve the sinner, for he had no claim—no merit—nothing to deserve—every thing to con

remn; but God felt the movings of compassion.

3. *Compassion brought him speedily towards his returning child.* The prodigal moves slowly; his sins are heavy; his grief oppressive; his fears numerous; but the father "runs"—hastens to meet him.

IV. God displays the utmost mercy, and the softest tenderness towards his penitent children. "He fell on his neck, and kissed him," &c. How beautiful this scene! The father who had been disobeyed—offended; yet he exhibits the greatest love, the most intense affection. He passes by the sin—there is no upbraiding; he passes by the pollution of the sinner, and even embraces him; he prevents his self-reproaches—his confessions, &c.; gives him the most tender token of his forgiving love; "kisses him;" is at once reconciled, &c. How surprising! Yet thus does God receive sinners, yea, the vilest of them; yea, thus he will receive you—every one of you, "Come, and let us reason," &c. He receives them graciously; forgives them freely.

V. The richness of the divine mercy will not prevent the humbled confessions of the true penitent. This conduct of the father does not cause the son to think less of his sins—his wanderings. Oh! no, but more. This makes him feel his guilt the more deeply. He must unbosom his soul by confession. His own heart requires this; his peace; especially his father's compassion. Oh! how the tears flowed; how difficult was utterance! his soul melted within him, and he said, "Father, I have sinned," &c., verse 21. Every word would bear emphasis.

VI. The state of the sinner is completely transformed in the day of conversion. What is the reply of the father? He turns from the son, and addresses the servants. The misery and wretchedness of the son must be relieved.

1. "*Bring hither the best robe.*" The rags are cast aside forever. The best—the choicest—the most expensive—the most ornamental—the most dignified is brought. What is this but the garment of salvation; the robe of righteousness; that in which God clothes the contrite sinner; the garment of praise instead of the sackcloth of mourning.

2. *The ring is put on his finger.* The token of the father's reconciliation; the sign of the son's elevation to his former rank; that which ratifies the gracious reception. This is the Holy Spirit. 'Because ye are sons," &c. "The Spirit itself beareth witness," &c. "Ye have not received the spirit of fear, but adoption," &c.

3. *Shoes on his feet.* The shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace, so that he shall now walk in the ways of peace and holiness, having the spirit of a holy, affectionate child. "He shall run in the way of his commandments to do them."

4. *The feast is provided.* "The fatted calf" is killed, and made ready, &c. He was dying of hunger—now abundance is prepared for him. Not only hunger alleviated, but a sumptuous repast, worthy of the father's riches, and of his still richer love. This is that supper revealed and tendered in the gospel; the provision of mercy—the feast of fat things—the banquet of love, wherein all things are ready. Christ's flesh is the food of the believer. He is the Lamb slain for the life of his people. We live by faith in the Son of God.

VII. Joy and festivity celebrate the sinner's return and acceptance of God. "They began to be merry." Others entered into the father's joy, and rejoiced with him; sadness and sorrow were put away; music, and songs, and gladness were heard. What overflowing, rich, unspeakable mercy! Yet this is all true on the sinner's conversion to God. "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God," &c. What an association of joy! The father—the servants—the son—God—angels—glorified spirits—the saints on earth—the accepted sinner. "I will praise thee," &c.

VIII. None but the envious and wicked will murmur when the vilest are received into the divine family. As the elder brother, &c.; the Pharisees of old. "This man receiveth sinners," &c. Surely he came for this purpose. But is not the joy reasonable and proper, yea, indispensable? Is it not meet? &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *What a subject for grateful retrospection to the Christian!* How all this is familiar and delightful!

2. *What encouragement for the penitent!*

3. *What hope for all!*

CHRIST EXALTED BY THE MULTITUDE.

"And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen; saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."—LUKE xix. 37–40.

THE passage we have selected for our present meditation is one of those striking fulfilments of prophecy in which the New Testament so amply abounds. Read the 9th verse of the 9th chapter of Zechariah. A similar prediction had been uttered by Isaiah, lxii. 11. One of these prophecies had been uttered nearly 700, and the other nearly 600 years before; here they are literally accomplished. Every sentence is adapted to elevate the true Christian, and excite in his soul more ardent praise to the blessed Saviour. Observe from the text,

I. THAT JESUS THE SAVIOUR IS WORTHY OF THE LOFTIEST PRAISE.

II. THAT THE GODLY OF ALL AGES HAVE SUNG HIS PRAISES.

III. THAT MANY WOULD SUPPRESS THE PRAISES OF CHRIST.

IV. THAT GOD WILL EVER SECURE THE LAUDATORY EXALTATION OF HIS SON.

I. THAT JESUS THE SAVIOUR IS WORTHY OF THE LOFTIEST PRAISE. Praise is awarded to men on earth on many and varied accounts: lofty genius; literary attainments; distinguished heroism; expansive benevolence; mighty achievements. The divine Saviour should be praised,

1. *For his personal excellencies.* "He is fairer," &c. The desire of all nations. In Christ dwells infinite knowledge—spotless purity—unrivalled dignity—unlimited goodness—and every feature of humanity, tenderness, and grace; a body without sinful weakness; a mind without error or obscuration; a soul reflecting all the moral glories of the Father.

2. *For his unsearchable grace.* The favor of his heart, which he manifested to a lost world; favor that surmounted every obstacle in the way of our recovery; favor that paid the severest price for our ransom. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Greater love," &c. No wonder this is part of heaven's anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

3. *For his wonderful achievements.* To note all these, we must give you the history of redemption. What has he achieved? The emancipation of the world from Satanic ignorance and vassalage; the bestowment of divine love through the channel of his own sufferings; the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers; the sure and certain exaltation both of the bodies and souls of his people to his eternal kingdom and glory, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given," &c. Observe,

II. THE GODLY IN ALL AGES HAVE SUNG HIS PRAISES. Abraham, the representative of the patriarchal age, looked forward to his day, and saw it, and was glad; his heart praised the promised seed. Jacob, in his dying predictions, sang of the Shiloh, and ended his life exulting, "I have waited for thy salvation," &c. Moses chose as the subject of his eulogy, the prophet like unto himself, unto whom the people should hearken. David referred, in exalted strains, both to his character and work—his sufferings and triumph—his kingdom and glory; he died exulting, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," &c. Think of the songs of all the prophets; how they exult in Zion's delivery, and Judah's glorious king. At his birth, angels, and shepherds, and sages, all exulted in his advent. Wherever he went the mourners were made happy, the sick healed, and the lame danced for joy. On the occasion to which the text refers, the praise was public and loud, and expressive of the highest joy and exultation. The early Christians in all their assemblies sang a hymn of praise to Christ; so now, whenever Christian assemblies meet, one great design is to bless and laud the Saviour's name. It is delightful to contemplate, that the sun never sets on those who sing the hosannas of Christ—east and west, north and south. In the torrid and frigid zones; on eastern sultry sands, and mid polar snows, the glories of Christ are celebrated in strains of highest praise. He is praised in the happy musings of the Christian's retirement; he is praised at the family altar; he is praised by the rising generation of the sabbath school; in the social prayer-meeting, and

in the great congregations of his people. We notice,

III. THAT MANY WOULD SUPPRESS THE PRAISES OF CHRIST. In the text the Pharisees labored to do so.

1. *The skeptical and unbelieving would confine our praises to the works of nature.* They refer us to the landscape, the ocean, the firmament, &c. Or they would have us extol reason, and science, and philosophy, &c.; but would not give one line to Jesus.

2. *The profligate would have us sing of wine, and feasting, and sensuality.*

3. *The sanguinary would have us sing of war, and victories, and warriors, and conquests.*

4. *The self-righteous would have all praise to elevate their own goodness and superiority.*

5. *The formal and supine think it unnecessary or superfluous.* Now, all and each of these subjects are opposed to the praise of Christ, as much so as the odes which exalt Mohammed, or the songs sung to the honor of the idols of the heathen. The heart cannot give its highest emotions to these and to Christ. It must be Christ and not these, or these and not Christ. We observe,

IV. THAT GOD WILL EVER SECURE THE LAUDATORY EXALTATION OF THE SAVIOUR. He secured this at the birth of Christ, by giving the mandate, "Let all the angels of God," &c. Also at his ascension, "He went up with a shout," &c. He secures this in all saints by his Holy Spirit that dwells in them. It is a spirit full of love to him, and of praise and hosanna to Christ; it is his declared will, that Christ is to have equal honor and glory with himself. This is one of the characteristics of the Christian, he rejoices in Christ Jesus. He will secure this in heaven by the universal acclamations of angels and redeemed spirits, Rev. v. 11, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Are you amongst those who praise the Saviour?* Do you exult, boast, glory, extol, celebrate the praises of Christ?

"When he's the subject of the song,
Who can refuse to sing?"

I tell you who should not: those he has not compassionated—those whose nature he has not assumed—those for whom he has not died—those against whom his heart is closed—those he cannot or will not save: but of such there is not one in this congregation, nor yet in the wide world itself.

2. *Neglect of this duty by the Christian would be criminal indeed.* "The very stones," &c. The gay, the licentious, the frivolous, all would condemn you. Let your hosanna be the hosanna of the heart, of the profession, of the life. "In all things show forth," &c.

3. *The advantages of praising Christ.* Elevates the mind, refreshes the spirit, assimilates to the beatified. It dispels clouds, banishes night, brings day. What endless matter of praise in Christ!

THE TEN VIRGINS.

SKETCH I.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom," &c.—MATT. xxv. 1, &c.

THIS is one of Christ's most striking and impressive parables. It has to do with events of the most momentous character. It refers to the glory of the Saviour, the necessity of vital piety, the second advent of the Messiah, the glorification of believers, and the rejection, the everlasting rejection, of those not prepared for the heavenly state. It may be necessary, and, perhaps, most edifying, that we should,

I. REVIEW THE PARABLE IN ITS LITERAL SIGNIFICATION. The event described is that of an eastern marriage procession. The bride is brought to the house of the bridegroom with great pomp and splendor. The friends of the bridegroom and bride are invited to join in the procession, and to partake of the banquet with which it would be followed. The procession was generally delayed till evening, sometimes till midnight. Those who were to grace the train must have lighted torches, or flambeaux; and to keep these burning, they provided vessels of oil, into which they were dipped, or which they poured upon them. In the present instance the bridegroom delayed his appearance until midnight, and in the interval the virgins all slumbered and slept. At length the cry is heard, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," &c. Then they all arise to get their torches ready, that they may go forth to meet him. Part, however,

of the company had neglected a provision of oil for the future, and they exclaimed, "Our lamps are gone out." They sought assistance from the other persons in attendance, but their stock was only adequate to their own necessity. And while they labor to supply the deficiency, the bridegroom appears, and they who are ready, go forth to the honors and enjoyments of the marriage feast. The others now try to gain admission, but they are rejected, with the solemn announcement, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." Let us now consider,

II. ITS SPIRITUAL APPLICATION.

1. *The Bridegroom is Jesus.* This is one of the general scriptural representations of the Saviour, and there is one passage in the Psalms which is almost identified in spirit with this parable, Ps. xlv. 10, &c. The prophet Isaiah, xliv. 5, also. The Saviour gave the same representation of himself in his parable of the marriage feast, Matt. xxii. 1, 2. So also when asked wherefore his disciples did not fast, as those of John, Jesus replied, "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them," &c., Matt. ix. 15. So John the Baptist testified of Christ, John iv. 29, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom," &c.

III. THE OBJECT OF THE BRIDEGROOM'S AFFECTION IS THE CHURCH. Thus the apostle writes to the Corinthian church. "For I am jealous over you," &c., 2 Cor. xi. 2, &c. See also Eph. v. 25. Now to render a union possible between Christ and mankind,

1. *They must have one nature.* Hence Christ took our nature upon himself, he dwelt in our flesh, became a man, made of a woman, &c. And he provided the means for restoring the sinner to the divine nature. For the renewal of his heart and life. See Titus ii. 14, and iii. 4.

2. *They must have one mind.* In our natural state, we are alienated, at enmity, &c. Now Christ, by the exhibition of his love in the gospel, overcomes this. By the power of his truth he melts the soul. By the exhibition of his own bleeding side he allures to himself, draws the soul to him; the rebel throws down his weapons, and exclaims, "I yield, I yield," &c.

3. *In conversion the soul is espoused to Christ.* Thus the apostle said, "I have espoused you to Christ," a promise and engagement of marriage. Jehovah very affectionately reminded Israel of his espousal to that people, Jer. ii. 2.

4. *The marriage celebration is reserved for his second advent.* To this John refers us in one of his visions. "Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready," Rev. xix. 7. With that event will conclude all the arrangements of grace, and will begin all the dignity and bliss of perfected glory to his church. The whole church of Jesus will stand thus related to Christ forever and ever. So John thus again describes the splendors of this glorious consummation, Rev. xxi. 2, &c. Now let us conclude by placing Jesus as the dignified bridegroom before you. We remind you that,

(1.) *His glory is supreme.*

(2.) *His riches are infinite.*

(3.) *His beauty unrivalled.*

(4.) *His love unspeakable, and passing understanding.*

(5.) *Are not his claims, then, irresistible?* Notice also as to the character of true Christians; represented as virgins in this parable. As such they are,

(1.) To be separated from the world.

(2.) To be distinguished for their purity of heart and life.

(3.) To live in the enjoyment of love to Christ, and hope of union with him forever and ever. We offer Jesus to you all. Reject him not, &c. We congratulate believers on their choice and portion. We expostulate with those who have forsaken him. Oh return, &c.

THE TEN VIRGINS.

SKETCH II.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom," &c.—MATT. xxv 1, &c.

WE previously considered the former part of this parable, and also the general spirit of the whole, as applied to an eastern marriage ceremony. We noticed the character of Christ as a bridegroom; believers as virgins, &c. We now have to consider the virgins,

I. IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL PROBATIONARY CONDITION. "Who took their lamps."

Now in this, the profession of Christianity is exhibited. The people of God are not in darkness, but they are light in the Lord; and they are to shine as lights in the world. Religion is to be seen, to be manifest. "City set on a hill," &c. Now the virgins are described as "taking their lamps, and going forth," &c. This profession of discipleship and friendship to Christ,

1. *Should arise from love to Christ.* In the early ages of Christianity, no fear of any other motive. Now, it is respectable; in some cases profitable. The love of Christ is the only right constraining principle. "I am crucified with Christ," &c.

2. *Must be public and open before men.* "Follow me," &c. "Let your light, &c., *before* men." "Went forth."

3. *Must be constant and continued.* Every day, place, and circumstance. In good report, and evil report, &c. Must be maintained, held fast, &c.

4. *It must be sustained by divine grace.* Grace is the "oil." This will give the profession the right tone. Beautify us; make us to be firm and persevering. Now a profession without the grace of God in the soul, will,

(1.) Be joyless; no real bliss; no real peace; no solid hope. Mechanical; no experience; no feeling in it.

(2.) It is promiseless. The promises are given to the true Christian; to the sincere follower of Christ.

(3.) It is often transitory. No root; soon given up; soon cast off. How necessary, then, the oil of divine grace! Doing all in Christ's name, and in the sufficiency of his grace. We now proceed to notice,

II. THE DELAY OF THE BRIDEGROOM, AND THE VIRGINS IN THEIR SLEEPING STATE. "The bridegroom tarried." The early Christians expected his second advent in their time. So in many ages since. But as to that period it is not revealed, except that it will be in the end of the world. Now, in the interval, one generation after another passeth away. Of the virgins it is said, "They all slumbered and slept." This evidently refers to death. Death to the godly, is falling asleep; sleeping in Jesus. Now let it be observed, that up to this period, there are no obvious distinctions between the two classes of virgins. They all have the same title; all have lamps; all are burning for a time, and they all fall asleep, waiting for the bridegroom. But this is the grand and awful difference: the wise have prepared for the future; "the prudent man foreseeth the evil," &c. The others have been satisfied with the present; have no supply for the coming exigency. See 1 Tim. vi. 19. We notice,

III. THE SOLEMN ANNOUNCEMENT. "Behold the bridegroom cometh," &c.

1. *The period of this announcement is midnight.* At the end of our world's day. Not literal: it cannot be so to all the world.

2. *The pomp and magnificence of his coming.* The event is most momentous, and the scene truly sublime. All beings in all worlds will be interested in it. The Father now sees the end of his gracious administration to a world of sinners. Jesus now has the full crown of his joy, his promised reward. Believers now hail the day of their full and eternal redemption, the coronation of the saints. Angels now grace the train of the descending Judge, the glorified Messiah. Devils and lost spirits now tremble, as they wait for the passing of their final sentence and their irrevocable doom. The dead, small and great, hear the trumpet's loud, shrill blast; and the graves, and the sea, and death, and hades, give up their dead. "Behold the bridegroom cometh," is heard by each and every human being. "Then all those virgins," &c. And now we notice,

IV. THE AWFUL DEFICIENCY OF THE FOOLISH VIRGINS IS DISCOVERED. And the foolish said, "Give us," &c. What a discovery! Lamps gone out! and gone out when most needed. What shall they do? They apply to the wise virgins. "Give us of your oil;" but the wise reply, "Not so," &c., verse 9. In this life we cannot give grace to each other. How much less then! Let me suppose a few cases which this passage suggests. Parents and children;—and the former have only had the provision of oil, and for the son to say to his father, Give me of your oil; the daughter to her mother, &c. Wives and husbands;—and the latter have not had the store of oil, and shall say, "Give me," &c. The pastor and people, and they shall say to him, "O give us," &c. Not a saint will have more than his own state will require. Will any in this assembly put the request? or will any have to give the refusal? Notice,

V. THE CONCLUSION OF THE CEREMONY, AND THE CONSUMMATION OF THE FEAST. The wise join in the train and are acknowledged

as the friends of the bridegroom, and they go into the marriage. Their hopes are now realized; their desires now fulfilled; their joys now complete; their salvation now perfected, and that forever. The bliss, the glory, are unutterable. But the foolish virgins labor to supply the deficiency in seeking oil. But "the door is shut." What a solemn sentence!

(1.) The door of opportunities and means now shut. Not a messenger, not a sanctuary, not a sermon; the season of means all passed forever.

(2.) The door of mercy, which had been open to all for thousands of years, now shut. The king has laid aside the golden sceptre.

(3.) The door of hope;—only one in the universe, and that closed: everywhere else black despair.

(4.) The door of heaven which Christ opened, as our sacrifice and priest. But now he has retired from the intercessory, and has given the keys of authority to the Father, that God may be all and in all. And the exclusion is absolute;—urgent entreaty avails not. They knock, and cry "Lord, Lord," &c. But the solemn sentence concludes the fearful scene. "Verily, I say unto you," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the subject lead to solemn examination. Are we Christ's real disciples? Have we the oil of grace in our hearts—laid up? Do we wait for Christ's coming? Is this the end of our lives? the one grand object ever in view?

2. Exhortation to earnestness and diligence. This is the one thing needful, &c. Be steadfast and immoveable. Be diligent, that ye may be found, &c.

3. It inculcates vigilance on all. "Watch," &c. In one sense Christ comes at death. At least our probationary opportunities then end. Oh then, let us live, and pray, and watch. "Hold fast that which thou hast," &c.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves," &c.—LUKE x. 36, 37.

IT is somewhat doubtful whether this is a parable or a narrative of facts which had come under the notice of the Redeemer yet we admit that some of the chief instructions of Jesus were delivered in parables. When he wished to set forth the readiness of God to receive humble, repenting sinners, he delivered the series of parables connected with the lost sheep, lost piece of silver, and the prodigal son; when he wished to exhibit the importance of humility and the abominableness of pride and self-righteousness, he delivered the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. When he wished to show the various results arising from hearing the gospel, he delivered the parable of the sower and the seed When he wished to show the eternal advantages of righteous poverty over worldly pomp and splendor, he discoursed on the rich man and Lazarus. When he desires to show the extent of the benevolent law of God, which says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," he presents before them the scene connected with the text We are called to contemplate,

I. A FELLOW-BEING IN IMMINENT PERIL AND DISTRESS, verse 30. "A certain man," &c. Part of the way from Jerusalem to Jericho lay through a desert, which was so infested with robbers as to be termed the bloody way; for greater safety, persons generally travelled in company; but here is a poor lonely traveller who falls into the hands of the robbers, who is stripped of his garments, wounded, and left half dead. The miseries of our world seem chiefly to be reducible to three kinds.

1. *Self-procured.* There is an inseparable connection between certain courses of conduct and suffering; some of the ways of men lead to penury, disease, and death. "The way of transgressors is hard." Even in this life it is often ill with the wicked The way of sin, shame, and ruin.

2. *Some of the miseries of life are clearly sent from God.* How often the wise, and good, and prudent, suffer. Behold the patriarch Jacob; look at Job; "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord," &c But observe,

3. *A great amount of our suffering is from our fellow-men.* Behold those children covered with shame and misery! whence is it? From their wicked parents. See those parents heart-broken! how is it? Their children are vile, irreverent, without natural affection. See that man ruined in his reputation and property. How is it? He has

been swindled out of his property, &c. Sin ripens men for every crime; hence, daily the possessions and lives of men are taken by beasts of prey, in the shape and form of men. Here is a poor man! They have taken his money and his clothes, and wounded him; left him weltering in his gore, "half dead." "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." We are called to witness,

II. Two official religionists exhibiting a total want of humanity. One of them is a priest, the other a Levite, individuals closely connected with the rites of a divine religion. No doubt the hopes of the man would be revived as he saw two travellers, especially when he beheld their priestly apparel; the priest, however, went at once on the other side, as if he had not seen him, or were intent on some more important business. The other stood opposite and looked, and then he too, whatever he might feel, passed by, &c. Perhaps he pitied, but he helped not. Observe, they trampled upon the principles of humanity, patriotism, and religion; that religion is hypocritical and totally false, which does not produce works of goodness and mercy. What avails religious knowledge? What avails religious profession? What avails assumed sanctity of life? "God is love." "Jesus went about," &c. "Pure religion," &c. "To do good," &c. We are called to witness,

III. A manifestation of mercy where it might have been least expected, verse 33. "But a certain Samaritan," &c.

(1.) He was arrested in his course. "Came where he was." Easy to have evaded, &c.

(2.) He examined into his condition.

(3.) He had compassion; his heart melted, and it was not merely sentimental.

(4.) He entered on a course of kindness, &c. "Bound up his wounds," lest he should bleed to death; poured in wine as an astringent to cleanse, &c.; oil as an emollient to heal; did not leave him to his fate; set him on his beast, &c.; took him to the inn, gave him two denarii, and engaged to pay the remainder. Here was *generous, practical,* and *continued goodness.* Think of the excuses he might have made, "I am a Samaritan, I hate him, and if he had seen me thus he would not have helped me. Let his own people help. I am on a journey," &c. Consider,

IV. Christ's practical application of this parable. "Go and do likewise." When you see human misery do not neglect it. According to your means and opportunity do good.

(1.) Such a course will be exceedingly pleasing to God.

(2.) Have a happy influence on your own hearts.

(3.) Will secure you an interest in the benign providence of God, Psalm xli. 1, &c.

(4.) Will not go unrewarded at the last day, Matthew xxv. 35, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *The subject has been considered by some as representing the character and work of Christ.*

(1.) Man's condition, &c.

(2.) The inefficiency of the law and sacrifices to help.

(3.) The gracious visitation of Christ to our world.

(4.) His provision; wine and oil; his precious blood, and divine Spirit.

(5.) His taking him to the banqueting house of his church, &c. Christ is now passing. We learn,

2. *True mercy embraces both the bodies and souls of men.* Christian benevolence is universal; it extends to all objects; not a mere relative or domestic feeling; not local—not national. Wherever there is a human being in misery, whether of body or soul, we are bound to show compassion and help.

THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray the one a Pharisee and the other a publican," &c.—Luke xviii. 10–14.

Prayer forms a leading exercise in every system of religion under heaven; it was one of the evidences of patriarchal piety; it was one of the frequent services of the tabernacle, and afterwards of the temple. Mohammedanism is distinguished for its numerous prayers. Pagans of every grade and age have performed their devotional services to their imaginary deities. The worshippers of Baal cried from morning to evening to their senseless idol. How important then that Christians should not allow ignorant pagans to rise in condemnation against them at the last day; but it is no

every thing which men present, that God will regard or acknowledge as prayer; to this end is the scope and design of the parable before us. Let us,

I. Consider the character and prayer of the Pharisee, and his rejection of the Lord.

1. *The person.* A Pharisee, of the strictest sect of the Jews. Persons who made pretences to very superior piety, but who generally were filled with the spirit of self-righteousness and spiritual pride. Men who sought their own glory rather than the glory of God.

2. *The place to which he repaired.* "The temple." Building erected for God's worship and glory. Here the sacrifices were presented, the law read, and prayer offered to God; it was emphatically to be a house of prayer for all nations. One of the leading designs of worship is, to make prayer and supplication to God.

3. *The service he offered.* I cannot call it prayer, for not one word of petition, or supplication, or intercession is found in it. There was, however, apparent *thanksgiving*, and that is part of prayer, but even that, while it professed to honor God, was a mere exaltation of self. What he said was in commendation of himself under the mask of thanking God. He thanked God because he was,

(1.) *Not as other men.* Not so vile as the vilest; but probably he might owe much of this to his education, to parental restraints, and the more favorable circumstances in which the providence of God had placed him. What would you think of a man, even in the presence of his fellow-mortals, praising himself because he was not a savage, or an assassin, because some of his fellow-men were such!

(2.) But he refers to his *good deeds.* "I fast," &c. These he thinks render God under obligations to him, or at any rate, give him a right to God's peculiar regards.

(3.) *But he contrasts himself with his fellow-worshipper.* How odious! "Or even as this publican." Instead of feeling pity or compassion for him, instead of giving him a place in his prayers, he tries to exalt himself by abasing his fellow. Yet how often are we thus guilty! How often do we hear for others! How often institute invidious comparisons! This was his service, but where was the prayer? Where the confession of sin—the contrition—the supplication? He asks no favor, seeks no pardon, entreats no grace. Self possessed the throne, and he was totally ignorant of his own heart, of the purity of God's character and law.

(4.) Let us notice the *result.* God was not honored nor pleased. God beheld him afar off; his only reward was the delusion of his own heart, the infatuated self-complacency of his own soul. Observe,

II. The character and prayer of the publican with his acceptance of God.

1. *He worships in the same place, but feels unworthy of the privilege.* Stands afar off, considers it holy ground, fears to draw near: how slow his approach, how reverent!

2. *He would not look towards God's holy place.* "Would not lift," &c. Why would he not look up? He thought of its purity, and felt his vileness; he thought of its goodness and his ingratitude; he thought of its holiness and his guilt with its desert, and therefore lifted not his eyes, &c.

3. *He smote upon his breast.* He was inwardly smitten—his conscience condemned; he felt his guilt, his worthlessness, and smote upon his breast. Ah! that treacherous heart—that ungrateful, wicked heart.

4. *He prayed fervently for mercy.* In this prayer,

(1.) *The object was right.* "God" the only object of prayer. Who hears and answers prayer.

(2.) *The confession was appropriate.* God demands confession. There are promises given to it. Is it not proper? If God would dispense with it, the ingenuous penitent could not. "A sinner." He extenuates not—he mentions not one righteous act. A sinner—nothing else, nothing better.

(3.) *His request was suitable.* He asks for mercy, not justice, but mercy, compassion, to the unworthy; kindness to the miserable. Every sinner needs this; nothing else will save.

(4.) *His suit was granted.* He went down "justified." "*Rather,*" is in italics. God was glorified, God's justice and mercy; God heard, approved, and accepted the suppliant, and granted his request. God was propitious, and he received mercy. From the whole we learn,

1. *How liable are we to be deceived as to our true state!* Do not err in this; be not the victims of infatuation, especially as to self-righteousness.

2. *How necessary is self-abasement!* Grace always humbles, always prostrates. If we are not abased we are strangers to God's grace; no exception to this; nothing will supply its place.

3. *What encouragement to the contrite!* "To that man will I look," &c. "A broken and contrite heart," &c. How many of you have felt thus? Prayed thus, &c. If not, do so now. God is seated on a throne of grace; draw near and look to the sacrifice God has provided; utter this fervently, and you shall not, you cannot pray in vain, &c.

THE PENITENT MALEFACTOR.

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," &c.—Luke xxiii. 42, 43.

The circumstances attending the death of Jesus were of the most wonderful kind. The blessed Messiah had for three years been traversing the land of Judea, illumining the benighted, healing the sick, and making the miserable and desponding happy. No teacher had ever delivered such discourses; no one had ever wrought such miracles; no one had ever exhibited such piety, benignity, and love; yet, by the malice of his own countrymen, he is persecuted even to death, and we are called to witness him enduring all the painful agonies attending crucifixion. He is now dying the ignominious death of the cross; but his death, like every other part of his wonderful history, is distinguished by scenes of the most wonderful character. The rocks rend —the earth quakes—the sun is darkened —and the veil of the temple is rent in twain. During these amazing phenomena, we are called to witness the conduct of those robbers who were suffering with Christ. One of them joined in the unbelieving railing of the surrounding mob, and said, "If thou be the Christ," verse 39. "But the other," verse 40, and text. There are two leading divisions.

I. The prayer he presented.
II. The answer he received.

I. The prayer he presented. Two things must be noticed before we enter upon his prayer.

(1.) *The character of the supplant.* He is denominated a thief and malefactor. It is probable that he had been a public robber—a daring outlaw; and not improbable that they had been confederates in crime; doubtless one of the most debased and abandoned of criminals, for only such were condemned to crucifixion.

(2.) *The situation in which he was placed.* Suffering the extreme sentence of the law; enduring the horrible death of crucifixion; a situation of extreme debasement and agony. Life was just ebbing out; on the verge of the eternal state; the world and time receding; his day of probation just expiring. Observe, then, his prayer.

1. *Short, yet comprehensive.* A few words embody all his requests; but in those words what an immensity of meaning!

2. *It was spiritual in its object.* It referred not to the body; not to ease or mitigation; or to his life. It all had respect to the soul and a future world.

3. *It was a prayer of mighty faith.* Faith in the *soul's immortality;* faith in a future state, &c., of rewards; it was faith in Jesus Christ. Observe, he addresses him as *Lord;* but where were the signs of his dignity and power? Yet he honored him as the Messiah—as having an invisible kingdom. "Thy kingdom;" and herein he recognised the Godhead of Christ, as the Lord of the invisible world. He acknowledged his *prerogative* to dispense future rewards, "Remember me," &c.; but it was also *mighty, wondrous* faith. Consider his character; his condition in life; his unfavorable position as to means. Contrast his state with the worthies of the Old Testament, or the disciples of the New. Moses believed; but then God addressed him, and showed him the symbol of his presence in the burning bush. Abraham believed; but then he had many precious promises. Isaiah believed; but he saw his glory. John the Baptist believed; but he saw the heavens opened, &c. The disciples believed; but they beheld his mighty works, &c.; they saw his miracles, &c.; transfiguration, &c.; even Saul of Tarsus was surrounded by his resplendent glory; but the dying malefactor beheld Christ in the depths of his sorrows; in the period of his abasement; reviled and crucified as an enemy to God and man; and yet through the whole his faith penetrated, and he recognised in that sufferer the Lord of the universe, and the only Saviour of the world; yet he so believed in Christ as to rest his

soul upon him, and depended upon his mercy for eternal life. He saw no sceptre—beheld no crown—had no prospect of a kingdom—that is, to the eye of sense, yet he recognised all these as rightly belonging to Jesus the Messiah, and as such he prayed, "Lord, remember," &c.

4. *This prayer was associated with the genuine fruits of repentance.* Saving faith and repentance are ever joined together. We do not add repentance as if it followed faith; generally it goes before; but in all cases it is connected with it. He confesses his own guilt, "We indeed suffer justly," &c., verse 41; he rebukes the impiety of his suffering fellow-malefactor, "Dost thou not fear God?" &c., verse 40; he affirms the innocency and the holiness of Christ, "But this man hath done nothing amiss," verse 41. Thus, his last moments were spent in confession of sin, in reproof of wickedness, and in vindicating the Redeemer.

5. *His prayer was effectual.* He did not pray in vain; and who ever did? Jesus was not so much absorbed in his own agonies as to neglect the suppliant by his side. He listened to his petition; he entertained his request; and richly exhibited towards him the fulness of his grace. Christ came into the world to save sinners, and his last act was to deliver one of the chief of them from guilt and eternal death. Notice,

II. THE ANSWER HE RECEIVED. "And Jesus said, Verily, I say," &c. Now, let us look at the various features this answer exhibited.

1. *It was immediate.* He did not defer, or put off his suit. On some occasions Christ tried the faith of the applicants, as the Syro-Phenician woman; but this was a desperate matter. Here life was expiring; and therefore at once Jesus mercifully replied to his petition.

2. *It was compassionate and merciful.* He had no claim; no right. Natural death was a penalty of his crimes against man, and eternal death the penalty for his sins against God. But the compassion of Jesus was affected. He saw him ready to perish, and therefore beheld a fit object on whom to bestow the last blessing of his mission to our world. He came unto Christ, and Christ opened his heart to receive him; he believed in him, and Jesus gave him the desire of his trembling spirit.

3. *The answer was peculiarly strong and positive.* Christ might have said, "I will not forget thy prayer, but will show thee mercy." But Jesus resolved to fill him with ecstasy and joy, by the most solemn assurance that his prayer was successful, "Verily," &c. "I pledge my name, and honor, and truth, and faithfulness, that this petition shall be granted."

4. *It was superabundant.* He prayed to be remembered, but Christ treats with him richly, most munificently. He gave unto him a splendid promise—a blissful assurance of a place and portion with him in glory, "To-day thou shalt," &c. Here are three things:

(1.) The place—*Paradise.* This word is of Persian origin, and signifies a garden of pleasure—a figurative description of heaven. It is used in reference to the garden of Eden; but Paul in his holy vision when caught up to heaven, calls it paradise, 2 Cor. xii. 4. John, also, in Revelation ii. 7, says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

(2.) In paradise he was to be *with Christ.* It is Christ's presence that constitutes the light and bliss of glory. The richest assurance he ever gave was this, "Where I am, there ye shall be also."

> "There we shall see his face,
> And never, never sin," &c.

(3.) He was to be with Christ in paradise *that day.* "To-day." "Before the sun sets thou shalt enjoy the light and glory of heaven. As a trophy of my grace, I will present thee this day to my Father, 'before angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.'"

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the richness and freeness of the grace of Christ.* The dying malefactor stands out on the page of the gospel that no sinner may despair. Here we see what grace can do—forgive, and cleanse, and glorify in a few hours.

2. *No encouragement for the presumptuous.* Only this case. Only one to prevent the abuse of God's long-suffering. A peculiar case altogether.

3. *The way of salvation.* Application to Christ.

4. *Death at once conveys to glory.* To die in Christ is instant, inexpressible, and eternal gain.

SATAN'S PALACE, &c.

"When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace," &c.—LUKE xi. 21, 22.

NOTHING so completely blinds the mind and hardens the heart as envy. It is one of those evil principles which completely poison the soul, render it totally callous, and prepare it for every evil work. It was this that led Cain to become a fratricide, and slay his own brother; this that led the sons of Jacob to devise the death of Joseph; this that caused Haman to attempt the destruction of all the Jews in the kingdom of Persia; it was this that led the Pharisees to treat Jesus with such scorn and unbelief. As often as possible they denied his miracles; and when they could not do that, they wickedly said that he cast out devils by the power of the prince of devils. To this the Saviour thus replies, verse 17. He then illustrates his power in casting out devils by the figurative language of the text. Notice,

I. THE STRIKING REPRESENTATION OF SATAN.

II. THE TRUE DESCRIPTION OF HIS PALACE.

III. THE MANNER IN WHICH HE KEEPETH POSSESSION. And,

IV. HOW IT IS BESIEGED, AND SATAN DISPOSSESSED. Observe,

I. A STRIKING REPRESENTATION OF SATAN. He is described in verses 18 and 19 as Beelzebub; that is, the prince of the devils. He is the head and leader of the fallen angels, Rev. ix. 11. He is called Apollyon; i. e. a destroyer. He is also styled the old dragon; the serpent; the adversary; the deceiver; Lucifer, the fallen bright one; Belial; accuser; and devil, or diabolus, signifying the slanderer. Now, the reality of such a being,

1. *Is fully established by the sacred scriptures.* By some who profess to believe the Bible it is said that the name simply refers to the principle of evil, and not to any living spirit. But the word of God as clearly teaches the existence of a Devil as the existence of God, and employs such terms as cannot apply to a mere principle. As a real spirit, he conversed with Eve; persuaded her to believe his lies rather than God's truth; and hence he is called the father of lies. As such, he accused Job, and thirsted for his destruction; as such, he tempted Jesus; as such, he is said to go up and down as a roaring lion; as such, Christ said he desired to have Peter, &c. We are exhorted to be vigilant, and resist the devil. It is said, too, that the devil and his fallen compeers are reserved for the judgment of the great day; see Jude 6; Rev. xx. 10.

2. *The text refers to his power.* He is described as a "strong man." Angels are said to excel in strength. We do not imagine this was impaired by their apostacy. His power may denote,

(1.) His authority. And he is a prince; the god of this world; the ruler of the powers of disobedience. It may denote,

(2.) His dominions. How vast and extensive! He usurped God's earth, and here he has his kingdom of darkness. In it are countless myriads of subjects—of men and women prostrate beneath his hellish and cruel yoke.

(3.) See the effects of his control. In Christ's day many human bodies were possessed. Look at the demoniac; look at the child possessed; look at the mental and moral effects of his influence on the souls of mankind.

(4.) Consider how he has maintained his possessions. For thousands of years. Learning, science, philosophy, and a thousand systems for effecting human happiness, have been vain and fruitless, and he has even resisted the reign of God extensively to this hour. Notice,

II. THE TRUE DESCRIPTION OF HIS PALACE. That is, the human heart; the soul of man. As his palace,

1. *Here he dwells.* This is his residence. As the Spirit of God dwells in the Christian, so the spirit of Satan dwells in the unrenewed soul. The various faculties and powers of the soul are the apartments of this palace, and these are all occupied by the prince of darkness. He surrounds the understanding with the curtains of delusion; he debases the judgment with diabolical perverseness; he decorates the imagination with pictures of uncleanness; he fills the affections with earthly things. Worldliness, vanity, or pride, furnishes the residence of the god of this world. As his palace,

2. *Here he has his throne.* God is not the Lord of the unrenewed heart. Here Satan is exalted and served; here he receives the homage of the intellect, and the willing service of the heart and life. Over the mind, and heart, and life, he sways his

sceptre, and has unlimited and incessant obedience. He says to one, 'Go! and he goes;' and to another, 'Come! he comes.' Observe,

III. The manner in which he keepeth possession. It is said he keepeth his palace, and thus his goods are in peace. Now, he keepeth his palace by his wiles and stratagems; by the subtlety and deceit he exercises. He does this,

1. *By keeping it in darkness.* Darkness is the element suited to his designs. He labors to keep men in ignorance of themselves, of God, of their responsibility, &c.; see 2 Cor. iv. 4.

2. *He keepeth it, under the influence of sense.* Sense has only to do with the palpable things of the present, "What shall I eat," &c. The body absorbs all the anxieties. Time present is every thing, &c. He urges men to seek present wealth, pleasures, &c.; he keeps this world first and uppermost, &c.

3. *He keepeth it, by the influence of procrastination.* He says there is plenty of time; ample means; lengthened opportunities; no need for present reflection; death is a great way off; and thus to invitations and warnings the soul replies, "When I have a convenient season," &c.

4. *He keepeth it, by producing lethargy and torpor of spirit.* Hardens the heart; petrifies the feeling; stupifies the conscience; gives an opiate to the powers of reflection, &c.; so that insensibility is produced, and consideration and anxiety annihilated. Such persons are like a man sleeping on the top of a mast; or a person walking heedlessly on the very verge of a burning crater; or blindfolded, rushing onward on the margin of a fearful chasm. He sometimes keeps it,

5. *By clothing the spirit in the habiliments of despair.* What a fearful sight is this! Hope extinguished; the fell mists of despair surrounding the mind. He then says, "Means are useless; the distance from heaven is too great; guilt too heavy; disease incurable." He fills the soul with the affecting language, "The harvest is past," &c.

IV. How it is besieged, and Satan dispossessed.

1. *The glorious personage by whom this is effected.* "Stronger." Almighty; all-powerful. His word effected wonders.

2. *The means employed are the gospel, and the Spirit of Christ.* The gospel is the power of God, &c. The truth makes free. It proclaims liberty, &c.; opens the eyes; awakens, excites, and draws the victims from the way of death.

3. *The change effected is wondrous and delightful.* Satan's power destroyed, and himself expelled. The soul becomes the palace of Christ. "Christ in you the hope of glory."

APPLICATION.

1. Believers, bless your deliverer.
2. Sinners, call on Christ to save you.
3. The victims of Satan's power must share his final doom.

VESSELS OF WRATH

"The vessels of wrath fitted to destruction."—Romans ix. 22.

"How readest thou?" is an important and necessary question to every diligent student of the divine word. If persons could read without having their views affected by preconceived opinions, then, generally, they would arrive at the meaning of the Holy Spirit. But it is too common to read the Bible, that we may establish our own opinions from its divine pages. It should be our desire that our opinions and judgment should be guided entirely by its hallowed truths. Men in law have to read with exactness, to know the spirit of the statute they are consulting. Chemists and apothecaries have to read carefully, that they may compound the medicines with accuracy and precision. Men of science have to exercise great attention, to understand the various laws of mechanism. Surely much more care is necessary to understand the truths of revelation,—truths which relate to immortality and eternal life. Negligent Bible reading, and reading with a mind under a sectarian bias, have been productive of the most awful mistakes and perversions of the divine word. This is especially true of this epistle, and more especially as to this chapter. The scope and tendency of the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters, are evident; —the sovereign right of God to cast off the Jews, and elect the Gentiles to the privileges of the gospel;—and to establish and illustrate this, is the one great design of the

apostle. The doctrines usually deduced, are the unconditional election of some persons, and the unconditional reprobation or rejection of others, as an act of divine sovereignty. Let us at this time consider the immediate language of the text. We ask,

I. WHO ARE THE CHARACTERS?

II. WHAT ARE THE EVIDENCES OF THAT CHARACTER? And,

III. THEIR FINAL END. We ask,

I. WHO ARE THE CHARACTERS? We might expatiate on the diversity of character specified in God's word. We might refer to the skeptic, the scoffer, the blasphemer, the sensualist, the proud, the worldly, the trifler, &c. There is one scriptural expression including the whole, "He that believeth not," &c. John iii. 36. All despisers and rejecters of the gospel of Christ, however profane, or however externally moral, are included. It is a fearfully wide range. How many are within it! Now, it may be noted that such fit themselves for destruction. God does not. He is the fountain of holiness and goodness. Satan alone cannot; he aids. It is his work to allure and deceive, but the sinner must co-operate,—be his willing slave. Men cannot make others such, except in the same sense in which Satan does so. It is the sinner's personal act. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself,"—self-destroyed. Sin destroys, as disease destroys the body. As rust destroys the iron; or the moth, the garment; or poison, life; or crime brings to an ignominious end. Unbelief destroys, as it neglects the remedy, puts away the Saviour, and rejects the intervention of God's mercy. Every sinner, therefore, fits himself as a vessel of wrath.

II. WHAT ARE THE EVIDENCES OF THAT CHARACTER? Two kinds of evidence.

1. *Internal.* Known only to the individual and God. Without any love to God, any delight in holiness, any internal trust and reliance on Jesus Christ; where the heart is indisposed to spiritual things.

2. *External.*

(1.) Indifference to God's holy word. A man must love and delight in it if he would be saved.

(2.) Neglect of the means of grace, especially prayer and hearing the gospel. These are essential to salvation.

(3.) Worldliness of spirit. "If any man love the world," &c.

(4.) Disregard of God's authority; living in sin; doing the work of the evil one. We need not add more signs of those who are vessels fitted for destruction. Consider then,

III. THEIR FEARFUL END. "Destruction." This does not mean annihilation. It is evident that the wicked, as well as the righteous, will exist forever. But it signifies the infliction of that wrath which their sin deserved. The psalmist has in view the metaphor of the text, Ps. ii. 10, 12. "Upon the wicked God will rain fire," &c. "The wicked shall be turned," &c. "These," it affirms, "shall go away into everlasting punishment," &c. Now this may be called destruction,

1. *As it will be the annihilation of all hope.* An indefinite kind of hope sustains men here;—a vague, uncertain idea that they will not eventually perish. This is sometimes based on God's mercy; on his indifference to the actions of mankind; on the certainty of all men being saved at last, through Christ; or on the exercise of repentance at the last hour. But now the candle of the wicked will be put out, and not one ray of hope irradiate the horizon of their prison forever.

2. *The utter cessation of all enjoyment.* What is existence without enjoyment? Destruction involves this, that they shall have no peace, no pleasure, no bliss, forever. The ordinary enjoyments of time are passed away; the sinful enjoyments of sense, &c. Not one stream of enjoyment left. The rich man requested a *drop of water*, but in vain.

3. *The righteous infliction of God's displeasure.* Imprisoned in hell; shut up in utter darkness; cast into the fiery lake; the companion of the devil and his angels. The preying of the worm of conscience; probably in sight of heaven, within hearing of its melody; yet excluded, and totally unfit for the felicity of glory.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. *It is the wickedness of sinners that ruins their souls.* Charge it not on some eternal decree; it is the inward resolving of the soul to live in iniquity. Charge not the unmercifulness of God; it is the want of compassion in your own souls. Say not

it is necessity; it is the necessity of your own will. God says, "As I live," &c.; Jesus says, "Ye will not," &c.; the Holy Spirit says, "If ye will hear my voice," &c.

2. *Vessels of destruction may be changed into vessels of mercy.* "If the wicked will turn from his wickedness," &c. "Hear, and your souls shall live," &c. "Unto you is the word of this salvation sent," &c. "He that believeth shall be saved," &c. Do you want instances? There is Manasseh; there is the woman that was a sinner; the extortionate Zaccheus; the dying thief; Saul of Tarsus; many in this congregation. May you be enrolled in the same record of salvation and mercy.

VESSELS OF MERCY.

"Vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."—Rom. ix. 23.

There are two great cardinal truths of our holy religion: that the misery and ruin of the sinner is of himself, and that the happiness and salvation of the Christian is of God. These truths are equally true and important. To lay the sinner's ruin at the door of God, is an attack upon his goodness and mercy, and giving falsity to his own asseveration, that he has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. To ascribe the salvation of the righteous to themselves, would be to rob God of his glory, and destroy the gospel system of grace altogether. There are three important questions which arise from the text.

I. Who are the vessels of mercy?
II. How do they become such?
III. What is their final destination?

I. Who are the vessels of mercy? Now the scriptures affirm all men to be *objects* of mercy. "God is good to all, and his tender mercies," &c. But an object and a vessel are very different. A vessel of mercy, is one receiving and containing within it the saving mercy of God. Observe the vessels of mercy,

1. *Heard the gospel of mercy.* "This is a faithful saying," &c. Heard of the mercy promised to the guilty; had the overtures of mercy made to them; were urged to receive it—to accept it.

2. *Such have received the revelation of mercy made to them.* Paul did so, and was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. The three thousand on the day of Pentecost did so, and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. The jailer did so, and confessed his faith in the Lord Jesus. So also have the saints afar off; they heard the invitation, and drew nigh. Enemies, they accepted the terms of amnesty; guilty, received the pardon through the blood of Christ, in which they had redemption, &c.

3. *Such give evidence of their changed and saved condition.* Delight in the God of mercy; rejoice in the merciful Saviour; glory in his cross; exhibit the spirit of mercy, by living in peace, and exercising compassion to those around them. They live as those redeemed and raised from sin, and misery, and death.

II. How do they become such? Not by lineage, as the children of Abraham; or of pious ancestry. Not by education, or the power of religious example. Not by acts of self-righteousness, &c.

1. *By the exercise of free grace on the part of God.* The grace of God bringeth salvation, &c. Salvation is traceable to this source, and no other. "Not by works of righteousness," &c. He has mercy because he will; because he delights in mercy; because it is rich, free, boundless, everlasting.

2. *Through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ.* Gift of God, &c., through Christ. His obedience; his spotless purity; his sacrificial death. "He loved us, and gave himself," &c. "Though he was rich," &c. "He suffered, the just," &c. "Himself bare," &c. "With his stripes," &c.

> "'Tis all our hope, and all our plea,
> For us the Saviour died."

3. *By simple and meritless faith on the part of the sinner.* Pardon is presented, the sinner receives it, and it becomes his own. He hears by faith, and lives. He looks, and is saved. He runs into the refuge, and is delivered. He opens his mouth in prayer, and God fills his soul with the saving influences of the Holy Spirit. In this there is no merit, unless accepting a pardon by a culprit is such. I would just add, that all the saints are vessels of mercy, and become such, by this one simple, saving process.

III. What is thier final destination? "Afore prepared unto glory." I doubt if these words literally refer to the Christian's

eternal destination; see Rom. viii. 30. There is a glory which pertains to all saints here. "All we with open face beholding," &c. There are glorious titles, glorious privileges, glorious promises, here. But let us look to the final destiny of the vessels of mercy. They are destined,

1. *To a world of glory.* Called to God's eternal kingdom of glory, they shall dwell forever in the blissful regions of immortality. Born again, to an inheritance, &c. To be the associates of angels, and to dwell with Abraham and Isaac, &c., in the kingdom of their Father forever.

2. *To a glorious condition of both soul and body.* The *soul* made intellectual, and perfect in holiness; invested with power to enjoy the blaze of eternal light, emanating from the face of God and the Lamb. The *body* to be raised in the likeness of Christ's glorious body; to be free from all the weakness, frailties, and pollutions of the flesh, and made holy in their degree, as God himself is holy.

3. *To a glorious reward.* To sit on a throne of dominion and power; to wear a crown of glory; to enjoy all the love of God, and all the bliss of the divine presence; to drink of the streams of pleasure; to partake of the fruit of the tree of life; in one word, to be "forever with the Lord." "In thy presence is fulness of joy," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Learn the true title of every Christian.* A vessel of mercy, not of merit, or excellency. Of mercy, first and last, and always.

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

2. *The Christian's present state.* One of preparation; of spiritual growth; of increasing grace; spiritual advancement. Let us not forget this. Be this our one great concern, to "work out our own salvation," &c.

3. *God waits to be gracious to every sinner.* You may all become vessels of mercy, and *now*. "For, behold, now is the accepted time," &c.

THE CONQUERING REDEEMER.

"And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer."—REVELATION vi. 2.

THE prophecies of Ezekiel and the visions of John contain figurative representations of the most sublime description; this kind of writing is common to all oriental authors, especially to the poets. It must necessarily follow that such portions of the holy scriptures are difficult of interpretation. Commentators have been exceedingly divided on the meaning of many of the prophecies of the apocalyptic vision. Some writers of critical eminence have applied the text to the victories of Titus and Vespasian, who came from the east and obtained complete dominion over Judea, destroyed Jerusalem, and carried the Jews captive into all lands. Others have referred the passage to the reign of Constantine. I think the very reading of the text impresses the mind, that however celebrated Titus and Vespasian might be, a greater than they were is here; neither should we be warranted in applying it to Constantine, seeing that the reign of Constantine began the era of the corruption of Christianity, and did more mischief to the interests of true religion than all the fires which persecution ever kindled. Scripture is often the safest interpreter of scripture. For an explanation of this passage of this book, I refer you then to the 19th chapter and 11th verse. Our text, doubtless, refers to the glorious achievements of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us notice,

I. THE SUBLIME REPRESENTATION GIVEN OF THE REDEEMER. And,

II. THE CHARACTER OF HIS GLORIOUS ACHIEVEMENTS. Notice,

I. THE SUBLIME REPRESENTATION GIVEN OF THE REDEEMER. Observe,

1. *His martial appearance.* Seated on a horse of war. Here we interpret the symbol as expressive of the *power* of Christ. "All power is given," &c. Bozrah's conqueror, &c., "mighty to save," &c. Of the *dignity* of Christ, see Psalm ii. 1. Of the *courage* of Jesus. He united meekness with the most undaunted intrepidity and courage; he appeared single-handed; he thirsted for the conflict; he trod the wine-press, &c. See the description of the war horse, Job xxxix. 19. Notice,

2. *The description of the horse on which the Redeemer goes forth.* "White," not

black, or pale, or red. Though Zechariah saw him upon a *red* horse, and though Isaiah speaks of his being red in his appearance, they referred to his personal conflicts in obtaining our redemption. "White horses," were reserved for generals, captains, and commanders. *Joshua* had a conversation with Jesus, as captain, when he stood over against Jericho. *Paul* represents Jesus as the captain of our salvation, &c. Now, the "white horse" seems symbolical,

(1.) Of the purity of Christ's person. Warriors were often the very basest of mankind; avaricious, proud, cruel, desperate. Jesus, essential holiness, purity embodied, heart of love, a life of truth and benevolence.

(2.) Of the righteousness of his claims. The spoiler and oppressor may ride upon horses of a crimson hue, as characteristic of their injustice and their oppressions. War is generally based on unrighteousness; often on no other principle but power; no object but ambition; no end but gain. Christ's warfare is one of eternal righteousness, equity, &c. He designs to regain his revolted dominions. Satan has usurped the dominion of this world, though made by Christ, and for Christ; filled it with terror and misery. Jesus contemplates its restoration to its original allegiance, purity, and glory. He is heir of the world, &c.; heir of all things; he has a right to reign, &c.

(3.) Of the felicity of his administration. Desolation and wo attend the footsteps of earthly warriors—countries ravaged, cities burned, families ruined, streams of blood flowing; often followed by famine and pestilence; how delightful the contrast! Jesus's conquests obliterate wo and misery. The desert rejoices, and the wilderness blossoms as the rose; justice and benevolence ever accompany his steps. One song is heard, "Glory to God," &c.

> "Blessings abound where'er he reigns;
> The prisoner leaps to lose his chains:
> The weary find eternal rest,
> And all the sons of want are blest."

Observe,

3. *The warlike instrument which Jesus bears.* "He had given him a bow," one of the most ancient and universally used instruments; now this bow is, *The truth of his blessed gospel.* All Christ's victories are to be obtained by this; this in the hands of the Holy Spirit is to evangelize the world, see John xvi. 7–14. He gained the personal victory over Satan by this—he sent out his servants with this—he frees men, he regenerates, he sanctifies by this. His word is likened to the hammer, fire, &c. "Our gospel," &c. "I am not ashamed," &c. "We preach Christ crucified," &c. See Psalm xlv. 5. Notice,

4. *His regal dignity.* "Crown." Not the essential crown of his Godhead, but his mediatorial one. Given him as king of Zion—the Head of his church. Now of this crown we notice it is,

(1.) A crown for which he covenanted and suffered, Isaiah liii. 6; Phil. ii. 6.

(2.) A crown which as our exalted king he now wears in heaven, Acts v. 30; Heb. ii. 9; Rev. v. 6. Observe,

II. THE CHARACTER OF HIS GLORIOUS ACHIEVEMENTS. "He went forth," &c. Now here we must glance,

1. *At the enemies he had to encounter.* Powers of earth and hell. Satan and the world allied. Judaism, Paganism, Mohammedanism, papacy, infidelity, and sin of every class. Observe,

2. *The conquests he gained.* He went forth "conquering." He conquered by his personal prowess in the *desert*, by miracles, on the cross, in the grave, from thence by his gospel. When John saw him he had obtained the great first general victory in the city of his death. Where was Pilate, the Jewish Sanhedrim, Calvary? &c. A victory over 3000 souls, and soon increased to 5000; from thence he went from conquering to conquer in Samaria, Athens, Corinth, Rome, &c. In the first ages he went forth, till Paul thus writes, Col. i. 16.

3. *He is still going forth, and there are immense triumphs for Jesus to gain.* Hence he goes forth from conquering to conquer. The world yet lieth in the arms of the wicked one. Six hundred millions yet in battle array against God, and against his Anointed. He is going forth now, in the east and west, north and south. "And this gospel," &c. "The stone cut out," &c. "Christ's conquering car," &c. Isaiah lx. 1–5, 21, 22. O yes! he must reign, and he must conquer, until the song of the world's jubilee is heard from every hill and vale, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

APPLICATION.

1. *Let the subject be applied personally.* Are you numbered among the conquests of Christ? Have you ceased to rebel and fight? Have you sued for peace? Have his arrows stuck fast? Are you enrolled among his friends? Are you the soldiers of the cross? If so, rejoice! Happy are ye, &c. If not, reflect upon your state; it is one of wretchedness, one of hopelessness, and one of certain ruin. Christ will break his enemies in pieces as a potter's vessel. "Wo unto him," &c. "Kiss the son, lest he be angry with thee, and thou perish from the way, when his anger is kindled but a little." "Agree with thine adversary whilst thou art in the way with him," &c.

2. *Remember you cannot aid Jesus unless you are enlisted under his banner.* Your gold, &c., he will scorn, if your heart be with his enemies. He demands first yourselves, then what you have.

3. *The friends of Jesus are deeply interested in the triumphs of the cross.* You are on one side of the mighty contest; your prayers must be there then; your personal efforts must be there; your pecuniary aid must be there also. Think of the territories yet unoccupied; think of the sin which yet abounds; think of the myriads and millions who are still perishing for lack of knowledge; think of the claims of humanity; think of Christ; and oh! think of the day of the Lord, when the Saviour shall be revealed in flaming fire, &c.

ALL THINGS FOR THE CHRISTIAN'S GOOD.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."—ROMANS viii. 28.

ALL scripture was given by inspiration, and all scripture is profitable, &c.; but there is infinite variety in the portions of the divine word. The word of God may resemble the heavenly firmament, but some portions are more radiant and bright than others. Some passages of the word resemble the milky way in the heavens; some texts shine forth with unusual brightness and celestial lustre. The chapter in which our text is found is like the brightest portion of the heavens, and our text is the most resplendent star of that radiant galaxy. I doubt if any passage of the holy word has been more generally useful to the Christian church, or more especially consoling to the believer in trouble. Let us, then, examine it, and see what counsel and consolation may be deduced from it. Let us,

I. EXPLAIN THE CHARACTER PRESENTED TO US. "Them that love God," &c. Now, here are three things:—

1. *The divine purpose.* Now, by this purpose we understand God's pre-determination to offer to mankind the blessings of salvation in Christ Jesus; and it was God's purpose that the Jews first of all should receive this offer, Romans i. 16; Luke xxiv. 46, 47. Now, the gospel was first published to the Jews, and then, according to God's purpose, afterwards to the Gentiles, Ephesians i. 7–11. Observe,

2. *The divine calling.* To call, is to invite, to entreat, &c. Now, it was God's purpose that in this order—the Jew first, and then the Gentile—should be called by the messages of truth to participate in all the blessings of the gospel. Thus the provision of the gospel is likened to a feast, and men are to be called to come in and enjoy the banquet. Jesus Christ called in the days of his ministry sinners to repentance; the apostles and disciples thus called men to repent and believe the gospel. Thus the believers at Rome had been called according to God's gracious purpose.

3. *The divine principle.* "Love God." Those who had thus been called, and who had obeyed the call, became the subjects of God's mercy and favor. Such had been chosen of God to be his people, his sons and daughters, and the love of God had been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them. Now, this divine principle imparted to them is evinced in loving God, "We love him because he first loved us." All who have believingly obeyed the call of the gospel, love God. They love him as their creator, preserver, but especially as their redeemer. They love his name, his word, his people, his ordinances; they love God truly and fervently in spirit; they love to meditate on God—to commune with God—to hold converse with him; and they earnestly desire to love him more, and to serve him better. Let us,

II. ILLUSTRATE THE TRUTH AFFIRMED. "All things work together for good." Now,

a few preliminary things must be noticed. The term, "all things," must in one thing be limited; sin must not be included, for sin is evil in its nature, influence, and tendency; and if sin could be included, then with propriety we might say, "Let us sin that grace may abound." But the apostle says to this, "God forbid." Then when it is said, "all things work together for good," we must take the word "good" in its highest acceptation; not present enjoyment, but final well-being. The soul in its moral advantages, and eternity in its final decisions, must both be taken into consideration. Limit your views to the present, and think only of immediate happiness, and the text would be inexplicable. Notice then, with this prefatory explanation,

1. *The extent of the thing specified.* "All things." All things in heaven; the blessed God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, angels, &c., spirits of the just made perfect. All on earth; all men; good men, by their prayers and love; and bad men, by their hatred and opposition. All events; prosperous and adverse—joyous and grievous—health and sickness—prosperity and adversity—life and death. All things in hell; Satan and his agents, by their frowns and temptations, though not joyous but grievous, yet afterwards is yielded the peaceable fruits, &c. All things in nature, providence, and grace.

2. *The operation stated.* "All things *work*." There is nothing in the mental or moral department of the universe entirely quiescent. "All things work;" thoughts, desires, imaginations, all work and produce their kind. All events and occurrences tend to some end. As in nature, so in the mental kingdom; as wind, light, rain, dew, calms, and tempests, all operate to some end; so all things in providence and grace work, and have a tendency to produce some effect. Notice,

3. *The universal harmony declared.* "All things work *together*." There is diversity of element, but the operation and the end are harmonious. Look at that musical instrument; all the notes and sounds are different, yet they all produce harmonious melody. Look at that most beautiful creature, light: there are seven prismatic colors, quite distinct and dissimilar; through a prism you perceive them separately, but they all unite together, and form that soft and radiant emblem of the Creator. Look at that scene in nature: there is the mountain with its craggy summit; the verdant valley, the flowing stream, and the roaring cataract; how diverse are the various parts, yet how harmoniously they unite to form the landscape and please the eye. Look at that piece of mechanism: see the various parts, in their action how opposite; wheels within wheels are moving in one direction, and a second in another, yet they all work together, and accomplish the design of the inventor. Look at the human body: what variety of parts and operations; some parts receiving nutrition, others throwing various elements out of the system; inspiring the air to supply the lungs, and respiring air again from the lungs, as it were, living and dying by rotation; and yet all these work together to sustain life and prolong our existence.

4. *The final end affirmed.* "All things work together for good." Separately, some things appear to work for good, and others for evil; but conjointly, they all tend to one blessed end, the real and eternal good of them that love God, &c. Now, let us establish this, for the apostle says, "We know," &c.

(1.) I appeal to scripture declarations. And in reference to positive and manifest blessings proof is unnecessary; so we will confine our attention to afflictions, sorrows, &c. Hebrews xii. 11; Romans v. 5, &c.; James i. 2, &c., "For our light afflictions," &c.

(2.) I appeal to scripture facts. There was Jacob and his final good in the time of famine, &c. See how "all things work:" even the envy of his sons is overruled, &c.; Joseph sold, &c.; Simeon, &c.; Benjamin demanded, &c. "All these things are against me," &c. Oh! no; they are all working together, &c. There was Moses, his final good, and the good of Israel; but see the events of his career edict; exposed in the fragile ark—yet how all things worked. There was the blessed Jesus; his final exaltation; and the salvation of myriads, &c. But behold his birth, life, sufferings, and death; but they all worked, &c., Acts ii. 23.

(3.) I appeal to scripture, as exemplified in your experience. Have you not proved the truth of the text in many cases? You thought that severe loss would have ruined you—that bereavement crushed, that sickness destroyed you; but now you observe

how necessary they were; that they all worked together, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. *Are you the characters described?*

2. *Rejoice in God's good providence.* In his universal, benignant reign.

3. *Cultivate the grace of contentment.* Be not murmurers; or anxious; or in haste.

4. *Look to the termination.* The soldier—the traveller—the mariner does this. Oh! cherish the spirit of the text, &c.

THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"—NUMBERS xxiii. 10.

OUR text contains the expressed desire of the wicked Balaam, and it has doubtless been the desire of thousands equally estranged from holiness and God. Even the wicked know that they must die, and it is well that they should think and reflect upon it. But, like innumerable other vanities of the imagination, this wish will be fruitless in its results, to all who continue alienated from purity and God. The end of Balaam was what may reasonably be expected to be that of all who live a life like his. The text refers to a character that we must define, an event that we must illustrate, and a desire that must be regulated.

I. A CHARACTER THAT WE MUST DEFINE. "The righteous." None are such by nature; none are such by mere education or parental discipline; none are such by self-exertion. This character is divine, and therefore of God. It includes,

1. *Justification.* By which, through faith in the Lord Jesus, we are constituted righteous, and dealt with as such. Isa. xlv. 25; Rom. iii. 16.

2. *Regeneration.* Born from above; born of God; partakers of the divine nature. This is the new man; the holy nature which the children of God possess. John iii. 3, &c.; Col. iii. 10.

3. *Sanctification.* Or the progress of the new man in holiness; the spiritual growth, and advancement in the divine life. This includes also the consecration of the heart to the service and glory of God. An increasing conformity to the holy image of the blessed God, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

4. *Practical obedience;* or righteousness of life. This is the great evidence of righteousness of heart. The fruit testifies that the tree is made good; that the fountain has become pure. He only is righteous who doeth righteousness. Those who have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him; following his example, treading in his imitable steps. "Being made free from sin," &c. Rom. vi. 22.

II. AN EVENT THAT WE MUST ILLUSTRATE. "The death of the righteous." Even the righteous must die. The righteous of all ages, except Enoch and Elijah, have died. The righteous patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and fathers, have all died. "It is appointed unto men once to die," &c. But the righteous die,

1. *Under the immediate direction of God.* The wicked often die prematurely. By their own hands; by the hands of the executioner; by the power of sin producing disease; by the judgments of God. But the righteous, in life, in sickness, and in old age, are the especial objects of the divine care. They are in his hand, "and precious in his sight is the death of his saints." When their work is done he calls them home. When they are meet for glory, he receives them to himself. The righteous die,

2. *In a state of gracious security.* They die in covenant with God; with an interest in Christ; the subjects of the indwelling Spirit; heirs of glory. "Die in the Lord." "Death is theirs." Not an enemy to destroy, but a messenger to conduct them to their better home. Death cannot separate the saint from Jesus. The righteous often die,

3. *In ecstasy and triumph.* "Have an abundant entrance ministered unto them," &c. Thus died Stephen, with the vision of glory before his eyes. Hearken to the apostle, "I have fought the good fight," &c. So thousands and myriads. Death has been victory. "O death, where is thy sting!" &c. Thus Payson: "The battle is fought, and the victory is won." The righteous always at death,

4. *Enter upon a life of immortality.* They are intimately present with the Lord. Ascend to the Saviour's God, and to their God, &c. To die is gain, immediate, consummate, eternal gain. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," &c. Then it is that Christ receives them to himself, &c

Death is the gate of life—the vestibule of glory. Our text contains,

III. A DESIRE THAT MUST BE REGULATED. "Let me," &c. It is a very proper desire. Should be the desire of every human being. But it will be fruitless unless it is regulated,

1. *By a personal regard to the character of the righteous.* The character and the death are united; they cannot be separated. We cannot die their death if we are wicked, impenitent, or merely moral, or only professors of righteousness. We must attain the spirit and principle of the righteous. It must be regulated,

2. *By a preparation for dying.* This, by the righteous, cannot be forgotten. He, therefore, acts, and prays, and believes, in reference to this solemn event. He is anxious to be ready for the coming of the Son of Man; to have the robe and the Spirit; the lamp and the oil; the title and the meetness. This is the only desire of any value. It must be regulated,

3. *By a constant deference to the divine will.* The righteous cannot suggest any thing as to the mode, the place, or the circumstances of dying. They say, "My times are in thy hand." They regard present duties and privileges, and leave all that concerns the act of dying in the Lord' hands. "I will wait all the days," &c. With God are the issues both of death and life.

APPLICATION.

1. *The subject of the text is solemn.* Dying is always an awful, momentous thing; the great crisis in man's history; the point on which hang the everlasting destinies of the soul. And, remember, all must die Oh yes! there will be no discharge from this war.

2. *What is your prospect respecting death?* I ask not what you wish or imagine; but what is the well-grounded prospect? Oh, appeal to your heart, conscience, life, and see if they refer to a safe and happy death-bed.

3. *How different is the death of the wicked from that of the righteous!* Dark, dreary, hopeless; the beginning of sorrows; the prelude to everlasting woes. Oh! avoid this. Deprecate this.

ESSAYS

ON

THEOLOGICAL STUDY.

The office of the Christian minister involves the instruction of mankind in the holy science of theology, or in the knowledge and will of the blessed God, as revealed to us in the holy scriptures. It is, therefore, essential to the right fulfilling of his office, that he should be fully and clearly acquainted with the truths he has to communicate to others. But as the ministry is a holy and divine calling, it is also essential that he should have satisfactory evidence that it is the will of God that he should take upon himself and execute the sacred office. When satisfied as to the validity of his calling, the momentous question arises, how he can best execute that work so as to glorify God, be instrumental in saving souls, and receive at last, as his great reward from the hand of the great Shepherd, the crown of dignity that fadeth not away? The best mode of theological study, the most effective method of composing and delivering sermons, with a clear outline of pastoral duty, cannot fail, therefore, to be of the utmost importance to the minister of Jesus Christ. Various works well adapted to assist in the discharge of his arduous and responsible labors, have from time to time been published. So far from depreciating any of these, we urge, if possible, a careful and diligent perusal of the whole; yet, for those who cannot study Claude, and Wilkins, and Taylor, and Hooker, and Williams, and Porter, and Bridges, and Bickersteth, and others of the same excellent class, we have labored to collect some of the best thoughts on the various departments of the ministerial and pastoral work, from the lectures, charges, and addresses of some of the most eminent preachers, both of past and present times. The collected and concentrated rays from so many excellent sources of theological knowledge, we trust will be found both instructive and edifying. In addition to these, we have not overlooked the works which have been written expressly on the character and duties of the ministerial office.

I.—ON THEOLOGY.

BY REV. A. RANKEN, D. D., OF GLASGOW.

Theology is that science which treats of God, and of his government of the world, of man's relations and obligations to him, of the mediation of Jesus Christ, of a future state, and of the discipline necessary to prepare for its enjoyment.

In order to the attainment of the knowledge of these subjects, it investigates the evidence both of natural and revealed religion, and establishes the faith of it on the most reasonable and solid foundation. It requires the service, and employs the aid, of all other human learning and science. The knowledge of languages, the study of which contributes to the early culture of the mind, prepares it for theology by gradually submitting to its observation and criticism, the grammar and idioms, the writings and opinions, the customs and manners, of antiquity. It enables the student to read and understand the sacred scriptures in their original tongue, to analyze words and phrases, to apprehend himself, and to explain to others, the true meaning of the inspired writers.

Next to the knowledge of languages, theology demands an intimate acquaintance with logic, that science which teaches the

student the nature of his own powers, and the mode of improving them, in order to sound reasoning. Pneumatology, which is usually the first branch of it, explains the nature of the several intellectual and active powers of the mind. The second branch illustrates their various operations in the art of reasoning, exposes the errors to which men are liable themselves, and directs them how to detect the unintentional mistakes and designed fallacies of others; in a word, it is a successful instrument for discovering the truth, and for distinguishing it from error. And a third branch of it is general grammar and criticism, or the first principles of taste and composition. From this view of it, logic must be necessary and desirable to all men who occupy any station above manual labor, and who can obtain access to it; but it is essential to the theologian, whose subjects of attention are generally abstract, whose adversaries are numerous, and often acute and subtle, and whose aim being to promote the glory of God, and the improvement, the salvation, and the happiness of men, any error in his opinions and doctrines must be peculiarly and permanently dangerous.

Moral philosophy, the science of ethics, or the knowledge of man's social relations, and of the duties and interests arising out of them, is so nearly allied to theology, that it may be considered as an important branch of it. It treats of him as a moral being, in a state of discipline and probation, furnished with the means of improvement, placed under the administration of the moral government of God, and in the various relations of society which require peculiar duties from him, and destined to be hereafter punished or rewarded according to the deeds done in the body.

The knowledge of physics, whether by that term we denote natural history or mechanical philosophy, is requisite to the study of theology. In the first sense it includes all the substances and phenomena of nature, animate and inanimate, and their arrangements and relations; in the second, it is the study of the powers, the sensible motions and appearances of bodies, in order to discover their causes, laws, and consequences. By the classification of the former, we simplify the knowledge of individual substances; by principles and laws applicable to the latter, we are enabled, in some measure, to explain the system of the universe, and to carry the mechanical arts to a high degree of improvement. By these means we trace a uniformity of design over all nature; we demonstrate a designing cause, an almighty and infinitely wise Creator and Ruler, in whose government we are disposed to place unlimited confidence. Thus informed and established, we are in no danger of being surprised by uncommon appearances, either of nature or art, or of being betrayed into superstition by them; or of mistaking the effect for the primary cause, or "of worshipping the creature more than the Creator."—Such studies, it must be acknowledged, are highly subservient to theology. They lay the foundation of all religion, and they form a barrier against superstition. "The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that men," who remain ignorant, superstitious, or irreligious, "are without excuse."

Civil history represents society in all its vicissitudes and revolutions, traces events to their causes, and describes customs and manners, in all their variety of barbarity and refinement, of vice and virtue, of rudeness and civilization. In the moral character of nations, and the uniform consequences resulting from it, we observe evidences of the moral government of God; "that righteousness exalteth a nation, but that sin is the reproach of any people:"—we see abundant proofs of the depravity of human nature; and we contemplate the accurate and wonderful correspondence between the prophecies of scripture, and their fulfilment in the events which profane history records.

Ecclesiastical history directs our attention to the origin and progress, the revolutions and consequences, of religious opinions. It describes the various dispensations of revealed religion; states the doctrines and character of each, the schisms, heresies, and endless controversies, which, under the Christian dispensation especially, have rent the church, distracted the nations, and disfigured, disgraced, and injured true religion.

Thus all the sciences and branches of human learning are subservient to theology. The more they are studied, the knowledge of it will be facilitated. It by no means supersedes them, but, on the contrary, engages them in its service as necessary aux-

iliaries. It reasonably holds them subordinate; they are the means, it is the end.

The subjects and design of theology are the most noble and interesting which can be conceived; the being and attributes, the works and government of God; the nature and apostacy, the guilt and depravity of man; the dispensations of religion for his recovery and salvation; the mission and death, the resurrection and exaltation, of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for man's redemption; the agency of his Spirit, the ordinances of his grace, the discipline of his providence, for the regeneration and perfection of the soul; the dissolution and resurrection of the body; the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments; the relations and duties of men, both as individuals and as members of society, and the advantages resulting from the observance of them, both in this life and in that which is to come. These are the great subjects of theology, than which nothing can be contemplated more sublime and interesting, nor more worthy of the attention and study of man. "Remember that thou magnify his works which men behold." "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands, he shall destroy them and not build them up."

It may be objected to the study of theology, that its subjects are metaphysical and mysterious. This is true in part; some of its subjects are abstract and cannot be explained. But this is a common occurrence in all the works of God. We can know nothing but their qualities, and must remain as ignorant of the substance of matter as of mind. We do not pretend to know any more of God, of his attributes, or of his government, than he has manifested in his works, or revealed in his word. If, even in these, mysteries occur, we may ask, What are the subjects in which they do not occur? They are found more numerous in nature than in religion; yet no one pretends that it is vain to study nature. The structure of the body and its operations, both in a healthy and morbid state, are as obscure as the constitution of the soul and her functions; yet anatomy and medicine continue to be studied with increasing zeal and assiduity.

It has been objected to the study of theology, that it is disgusting on account of the numerous controversies which occur in it. It is true they occur in it, but they do not properly belong to it. Discords and seditions will arise in the best-ordered government, not from any defect or error in the constitution or laws, but from the irritable temper and discontents of the people. Tares will grow up with the wheat, but the husbandman will not on that account discontinue his labor. The tendency to error renders study the more necessary to prevent it, or when it does prevail to distinguish it from the truth. As long as men exist they will differ in their opinions, and do differ in other things as much in proportion to their inferior importance, as in theology.

It has been objected to the study of theology, that it is irrelevant to human happiness, and therefore unnecessary. But if human happiness depends on God, the knowledge of his character and government must contribute to it. The very exercise of the mental powers on subjects so great and engaging is itself agreeable. The knowledge of them, when acquired, is a rich enjoyment; doubt is painful, certainty is a pleasure. Is there no difference between the opinion that we are the subjects of fate, or the sport of chance, and the belief that we are the workmanship of God, and the objects of his constant and paternal care; that our penitence and prayers are regarded by him; "that the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry?" Is there no difference between the gloomy apprehension of annihilation in death, or of everlasting torment after it, and the confident hope of future and eternal enjoyment? Was there no difference between the state of the rich man in torment, and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom? between the death of Judas and of Jesus Christ? "Mark the perfect, and behold the upright man, for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together, the end of the wicked shall be cut off." If there is any such difference between ignorance, uncertainty, or vague opinions, and an established system of religion, then the knowledge of it is necessary to happiness.

The excellence of this study will further appear, if we consider the duration of its effects. Other sciences are changeable themselves; their utility to man terminates with his death. But the spirit, the essential doctrines, the principles and moral effects

of religion, are always the same; their duration is eternal. "The word of the Lord endureth forever."

II.—ON THEOLOGY.

BY THE REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D.

THEOLOGY is not a theme devoid of attraction to the scholar, even as a mere literary enjoyment. History, criticism, logic, metaphysics, geography, civil and physical, and various other sciences, lend their aid. We have the transcendental reasonings of Dr. Samuel Clarke; and in the prose of such men as Fenelon and Jeremy Taylor, we have plants of as stately a form, and flowers of as beauteous a hue, as ever grew in the gardens of poetry! Such a class as this, too, is suited to the exigencies of the day. Treatises on particular subjects are not now in demand; but general literature is widely cultivated. Periodical literature has of late years made rapid strides in interest and importance, and half the talent of the country is engaged in it, while the newspapers teem with ability, rivalling that of the Spectators, and Ramblers, and Juniuses of other days! But this argues ill for science, except so far as it may be rendered subservient to gain. There is *diffusion* without *depth;* and people are likely to be caught by skepticism; but Butler has proved that *sound philosophy* is consistent with *sound faith.*

The objects contemplated by theology are remote and inaccessible. We cannot see God, or comprehend his nature. We have "neither heard his voice, nor seen his shape;" nor do the felt operations of our own busy and ever-thinking spirits immediately announce themselves to be the "stirrings" of "the divinity within us;" so that the knowledge of that Being, whose existence, and character, and ways, it is the *business* of theology to *investigate*, and the high *purpose* of theology to *ascertain*, stands distinguished from all other knowledge by the peculiar avenues through which it is conveyed to us. We *feel* him not, we behold him not; and however palpably he may stand forth to our convictions, in the strength of those appropriate evidences which it is the province of theology to unfold, certain it is, that we can take no *direct* cognizance of him by our faculties either of external or of internal observation.

And while the spirituality of his nature places him beyond the reach of our *direct cognizance*, there are certain other essential properties of his nature, which place him beyond the reach of our *possible comprehension.* Let me instance "the past eternity of the Godhead." One might figure a futurity that never ceases to flow, and which has no termination; but who can climb his ascending way among the obscurities of the infinite which is behind him? Who can travel, in thought, along the track of ages gone by, till he has overtaken the eternity that lies in that direction? Who can look across the millions of ages that have elapsed; and, from an ulterior post of observation, look again to another and another succession of centuries; and, at each further extremity in this series of retrospects, stretch backward his regards on an antiquity as remote and indefinite as ever? Could we by any number of successive strides over these mighty intervals, at length reach the fountain-head of duration, our spirits might be at rest; but to think of duration as having *no* fountain-head—to think of time with *no beginning*—to uplift the imagination along the heights of an antiquity that hath positively *no summit*—to soar these upward steps, till, dizzied by the altitude, we can keep no longer on the wing—for the mind to make these repeated flights from one pinnacle to another, and, instead of *scaling* the mysterious elevation, to lie baffled at its foot, or lose itself among the far, the long-withdrawing recesses of that primeval distance, which at length merges away into a fathomless unknown—this is an exercise utterly discomfiting to the puny faculties of man; we are called on to stir ourselves up, that we may take hold of God; but the "clouds and darkness which are round about him" seem to repel the enterprise as hopeless, and man, as if overborne by a sense of littleness, feels as if nothing can be done but to make prostrate obeisance of all his faculties before him!

Or if, instead of viewing the Deity in relation to *time*, we view him in relation to *space*, we shall feel the mystery of his being to be alike impracticable and impervious. But we shall not again venture on aught so inconceivable, yet the reality of which so irresistibly obtrudes itself upon the mind,

as immensity without limits; nor shall we presume one conjecture on a question which we have no means of resolving, whether the universe have its terminating outskirts, and so, however stupendous to our eye, shrink by its finitude to an atom, in the midst of that unoccupied and unpeopled vastness by which it is surrounded. Let us satisfy ourselves with an humbler flight. Let us carry the speculation no further than our *senses* have carried it. Let us take account only of the suns and systems which the telescope has unfolded; though for aught we know, beyond the furthest range of this instrument, there might be myriads of remoter suns and remoter systems. Let us, however, keep within the circle of our actual discoveries—within the limits of that scene, which we know to be peopled with realities; and, instead of trying to dilate our imagination to the infinity beyond it, let us but think of God as sitting in state and high sovereignty over millions of other worlds besides our own. If this earth which we know, and know so imperfectly, form so small a part of his works, what an emphasis it gives to the lesson, that we indeed know but a very small part of his ways! "These are a part of his ways," said a holy man of old; "but how little a portion is heard of him!" Here the revelations of astronomy, in our modern day, accord with the direct *spiritual* revelations of a former age. In this sentiment, at least, the patriarch and the philosopher are at one; and *highest science* meets and is in harmony with *deepest sacredness*. Hence we construct the same lesson, whether we employ the element of *space* or the element of *time*. With the one the basis of the argument is the ephemeral experience of our little *day;* with the other the basis of the argument is the contracted observation of our little *sphere*. They both alike serve to distance man from the infinite and everlasting God.

There is a limit between the *knowable* and the *unknowable*. The one region is known to us by history, the other is beyond our reach. We must discriminate between the *facts* of the first, and the *fancies* of the last; and on the observance of this distinction it depends whether our literature shall be solid or visionary. Formerly, in natural philosophy, we were told of "plastic influences," and "whirlpools of ether;" but now we do not *dictate* to nature but *interpret* her. Now we are her *disciples*, instead of her *regulators*. We are content to read her book, which once we inscribed with the figments of the forbidden region. This is the habitude of modern science; and so I would have you deal with theology. Christianity was formerly contemned by "philosophy," but it was a philosophy of "vain deceits;" and the apostle cautions us against science, but it is "science *falsely* so called."

From *true* philosophy, religion has nothing to fear. She invites and welcomes its advances. It was because Newton humbled himself as a child, that the mysteries were so revealed to him; and it must be the same with theology. Sound *philosophy* is ever in harmony with sound *faith*. As with the things of *science*, so with the things of *sacredness*, we must discard fancies. We begin with natural theology; and when we have seen all that *can* be seen by the aid of that fainter luminary, we shall pass on to the brighter light of revelation. Impotent as the former may be, the very heavings and wants of nature will serve to recommend the remedy.

But natural theology is not so dark as has been supposed. It is said that the little globe of the eye shows more of the wisdom of the Creator than the planetary system; for there are fewer contingencies to be met in the latter, while in the former there are many elements to be adjusted to each other—such as the adaptation of the eye to the varying distances of objects, the refractive power of its different parts, and its various motions by means of its muscles. Thus within the compass of a hand's breadth (as it has been observed) the Creator has impressed a more legible proof of his greatness than we can find in the wide range of immensity. Complex anatomy teaches more of it than sublime but simple astronomy.

You will inquire what ground there is, in the mind of a peasant, for natural theology. He cannot ascend to the cycles of the planets, or descend to the details of physiology; but he sees a thousand evidences of the Creator's skill in the use and adaptation of the organs of the body. He sees providence in the seasons, and in the fruitfulness which follows rain. He is unconscious of the process; but such a process does go on in his mind, and gives proof of a present Deity.

While natural theology casts light on the existence of a God, it also throws a light,

though less full, on his nature and perfections. But it is utterly helpless as to the relation between God and man. This is the darkest enigma; and natural theology, after all her efforts, leaves it unresolved. She sees enough to *awaken* fears of danger, but not enough to *allay* them—enough to *excite* forebodings, but not to *remove* them. She can *state* the difficulty, but not *unravel* it. She does cast *some* light on the subject; but it is the lurid gleam of the volcano, which does not *guide*, but *misleads* and terrifies. What is to be done? The answer must come from a *higher* theology. She knows the virulence of the disease; but must go elsewhere to find a remedy. Many gloss over the difficulty; and by sinking all the attributes of God into mercy, found on it their hopes of ultimate safety. But these are but airy visions. The lessons of natural theology have their limits; and we will not turn from the splendor of the meridian sun to the tiny lustre of the glow-worm. A French philosopher has ably remarked, that nature has not sagacity enough to *answer* questions, which she has yet sagacity enough to *ask*. Natural theology has sagacity enough to propose many problems; but the formulæ must be handed for solution to a higher calculus.

III.—THE ETHICS OF THEOLOGY

BY DR. CHALMERS.

THERE is a distinction to be drawn between the *ethics* and the *objects* of theology. Conceive a relation between two men—the relation, for instance, between a benefactor and a dependent—and you will see the moral or ethical propriety of gratitude being rendered by the one to the other. Now it matters not, in this respect, whether there are *many* or *few* benefactors in the world; the moral propriety of gratitude is the same; and it *would* be the same, if an instance of a benefactor and a dependent were never to be seen. If such an instance were only *supposed* to exist, gratitude would still be affirmed as proper in the supposed circumstances. The morality of the relation would be the same, whether we saw a real case or supposed a hypothetical one. Thus a peasant may feel the virtuousness of an action with the same force as one who has traversed the greater part of the world. The *objects* may be multiplied, but the *ethics* are still the same. The *objects* of philosophy are *facts;* the *ethics* of philosophy belong to another and distinct department.

The Baconian philosophy has been too much depended on. "Quid est," referring to the *object*, is that alone to which it is applicable. "Quid oportet," referring to the *ethics*, lies beyond the domains of the inductive philosophy. That philosophy has to do with *physical* and *mental* science, with the facts of *mind* as well as with those of *matter;* but not with *moral* science. The feelings and purposes of the mind, viewed as *phenomena*, differ from the feelings and purposes of the mind viewed as to *propriety*. The first belong to *mental*, the last to *moral* philosophy.

An analogy may here be borrowed from the relation between the mathematics and the facts of natural philosophy. The latter are ascertained by observation. Thus the existence of the planet Jupiter and his satellites is a fact to be observed; and Bacon did well in saying, that, in order to gain a knowledge of that fact, we must give ourselves up to the informations of experience, and that to ascertain the *visible* properties of things we must *look* at them, to ascertain their *tangible* properties we must *handle* them, and to ascertain their *weights*, or *motions*, or *distances*, we must *measure* them. But his philosophy does not go further than this. If we proceed to consider the mathematical relations between these objects—which relations conduce to many important results—we proceed on evidence of another kind; and we arrive at correct mathematical conclusions, even though it should turn out that the original observations were unfounded. The properties of lines would remain the same, though no objects having dimensions to be measured were to remain; and so ethical principles would remain the same, though all men were swept from the face of the earth. If lines were drawn between Jupiter, the earth, and the sun, they would form a triangle, having many important properties; but the properties of such a triangle would remain the same, even if those bodies were destroyed. A man might draw a triangle of the same kind on paper; and, without looking any more at the sky, might the whole mystery and mechanism of the heavens be established. The objects in the heavens did not give the man his mathe-

matics. They were *presented* to his mathematics, which were *previously acquired*, and which enabled him to draw correct conclusions. Nay, if these objects had never been known, or if that lucky invention which opens the windows of a distant heaven had never been hit upon, his geometry would still have been the same.

The same thing is true in *moral* relations. We may know the relations between objects, though the objects themselves be unknown. If an inhabitant of Jupiter watched anxiously over my safety, I should acknowledge that gratitude was due, though I should never see him. The objects of theology are beyond the reach of observation; but if revealed to us by competent authority, they meet, within the little cell of a man's feelings and thoughts, the appropriate ethics in relation to the most distant beings of the universe.

It is maintained by some, that religion reveals morals; but we would rather say that it reveals the *objects* of morals. It brings objective information; and man's moral nature instantly suggests the feelings proper to be entertained with respect to the objects made known. Religion reveals a Saviour; and man's moral nature suggests the gratitude to him which is appropriate.

These considerations will assist us in fixing the respective provinces of nature and revelation. An astronomer, in rising from *terrestrial* to *celestial* observations, seems to make a transcendental movement; but it is only so, as far as relates to the *objects* of the science—as when he moves the telescope from some lofty pinnacle on the earth to a planet in immensity. But there is no such transition in the *mathematics* of the science. You may draw a triangle on paper; or measure one with chains on the earth; or imagine one joining three heavenly bodies. There will be a difference between the limits of a triangle, the base line of which is measured by a pair of compasses, or is marked by flags waving on heights within sight of each other, and the limits of a triangle, the base line of which is equal to the earth's orbit; but the same trigonometry determines the relations of each, whether drawn from three indivisible points on paper, or from orbs which, though of stupendous magnitude, dwindle into atoms when compared with the immense spaces which lie between them. If you can trace the properties of circles on paper, you can scan the cycles of astronomy with as much exactness as though you could range through infinity with a plumb-line in your hand, or carry the torch of investigation round the universe. It is sufficient for this, that the line of a few inches in length has the same properties as one prolonged to the outskirts of creation; the same mathematics are applicable to both. Both in *natural* and in *moral* philosophy, facts or data are first to be learned by observation or by revelation; and then the relations between these facts or data are to be learned, and conclusions are to be drawn, in the one by mathematics and in the other by ethics. I would here recommend the perusal of Dr. Whateley's Treatise on Logic; for, though tough reading, it is a standard work.

It will be seen, from these remarks, that if by revelation new objects be made known, or others dimly seen before be clearly manifested—if God be set forth as ready to forgive—there needs no new principle to tell us that an echo of gratitude should respond to his voice who "speaketh from heaven." Nor does the great distance between us affect the moral relation, any more than the distance between objects in astronomy. The great elevation only requires a greater amount of gratitude; and, instead of rendering a *partial* obedience, we are required to dedicate our *whole selves* to his service. The principle which teaches my duty to a beneficent *neighbor*, teaches also my duty to a beneficent God. If another centre of gravitation, in some distant heavens, should be made known to us, we have already the mathematics by which to tell the course of all the satellites under its influence; and if another moon of Jupiter were discovered, we already have the mathematics to determine its course. Or should I find, as before mentioned, that the inhabitant of another planet watched over my interests, and suggested to my mind things essential to my welfare, it would be a thing foreign to our *knowledge*, but not to our *ethics*. I should feel the same gratitude to be due to him, as to the nurse that tended my infant steps, and anxiously noted my advance to manhood.

Many are fond of imputing a total *darkness*, as well as a total *depravity* to man. But this extends to *facts*, and not to *ethics*. Leland's book on Revelation is faulty, because it contains no recognition of this difference.

The Baconian philosophy is applicable to the controversy between infidels and believers. It is of paramount authority with respect to *facts;* but with reference to *ethics*, it is no more admissible than with reference to *mathematics*. If all the facts of the invisible world were screened from our knowledge, yet the ethics for determining our feelings towards them are in reserve, whenever the screen may be removed. There might be mathematics without astronomy; and so might there be ethics without revelation. There is a difference between the darkness in regard to the *objects* of theology, and the darkness in regard to the *ethics* of theology. The former is a *total* darkness; but the latter is only a twilight obscurity. The apostle allows some degree of natural light, when he speaks of the Gentiles having "the law written in their hearts," and of their being "a law unto themselves." Among the ancient Greeks and Romans, there was a knowledge of right and wrong. The self-devotion of Regulus, and the continence of Scipio, were noble sacrifices at the shrine of patriotism and principle. The tribute of public admiration was paid to the good and virtuous, and villany was execrated. Horace, Juvenal, and especially Cicero, evince, in their writings, that they were acquainted with this law of nature, or natural ethics.

From these observations we shall draw the three following inferences:—

1. By the light of nature we may, in a great measure, determine the veracity of revelation. The light afforded by the latter is chiefly necessary to disclose the *objects* of theology, not its *ethics*.

2. The internal evidences of revelation presuppose some independent knowledge on our part. Thus, if the *morality* of revelation be urged as an internal evidence of its authenticity, we are supposed to be competent judges of morality; and from the accordance of revelation with our notions, we infer its descent from all that is "pure" and "lovely." Now, this rule will not apply to the *objects* made known by revelation, because we have no previous knowledge of their fitness by which to compare them. Hence I object to deists bringing arguments against revelation from beyond the territory of the "knowable." If a powerful telescope were to reveal a new planet, it would be unphilosophical to disbelieve it, if affirmed by a credible witness. Now the objections urged by Rousseau and others against revelation, because of the alleged unreasonableness of its facts, is equally unphilosophical; but Christians sometimes descend to combat them on their own ground, by asserting the *reasonableness* of the facts of revelation. Now the arguments of both parties are irrelevant; and there is nothing for it but the surrender of the mind to credible testimony. For instance, I have no knowledge of what it was fit for God to do in detail; yet Macknight goes so far as to say, that it was proper for Christ to have a forerunner; and in the congruity of that circumstance, he finds an internal evidence for the truth of revelation. But this is to extend the line of our defence unnecessarily, and opens a wide field for the incursions of deists. There are many things on both sides that should be put *hors de combat*. If illiterate men were to put into our hands a letter, which they professed to have received from persons in a distant part of the universe, and if the facts of this letter, though at first sight unconnected, were all found to have a mutual dependence, and to form a consistent whole, that would prove that the illiterate men had not devised it, but that their testimony was true. But with respect to the *ethics* of revelation, we have a test in our own conscience, to which we can bring scripture; and their coincidence will form a strong internal evidence for the truth of revelation.

3. In thus conceding to nature the knowledge of what is right, we do not do so to the extent of her being less depraved than the scriptures assert; nor do we say that her ethics are so perfect, as not to be improved by revelation. There may be *morality* without *godliness;* and such is the depravity asserted in revelation. It is their consciousness of what is *right*, that leaves men without excuse in doing *wrong*. It is not because they are *blind*, but because they have some degree of *sight*, that their sin remaineth. The heavens are spread out above me; but if I refuse to look at them, I shall have only a terrestrial geometry; and so he who merely forms *guesses* as to the character of God, without consulting the testimony of revelation concerning him, may have a terrestrial morality; but he is living in practical atheism.

IV.—DIVINITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

BY THE REV. W. B. COLLYER, D. D.

It is of divine institution. Such are its pretensions advanced from the very beginning, and in no single instance yielded or relinquished. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The question of the perpetuation of this ministry under the same authority, will be considered when we speak of the appointment to it—at present it is enough to show, that it clearly professes to be of *divine institution.* Paul, not having received it at this period, not being numbered among the disciples, but called to this ministry "as one born out of due time," anxiously asserts his apostleship, as not having been committed to him by man, but by God.—"I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." And, whatever might be special in this first commission, it is evident that the principle of its divine origin, for which we contend, is represented as the essential quality of the ministry itself. This is the peculiar property of Christianity—its grand characteristic—that which distinguishes it from all other systems, and elevates it infinitely above human authority and resources. It is clothed in its own majesty—it travels on in its own strength—it is independent alike of friends and of enemies. It is of high importance to us this day that this fact should be established. It is at once the encouragement and the security of our exertions. On this rest its own success and stability. The seal of eighteen centuries has already been affixed to both; and its position in the nineteenth, amidst tempests which have shaken empires, and assaults directly upon its divinity, is alike commanding and impregnable. Disregarding the senseless clamors of the day, I demand the testimony of past ages—the result of the conflict, when the battle was fought "in blood, even to the horse bridles,"—when all the powers of the world, physical and intellectual, were directed against Christianity in the cradle of its infancy. Then, in that fearful and decisive hour, "the preaching of the cross," a ministry so apparently feeble, and upon all imaginable human calculations so utterly disproportionate to the exigency of the crisis, and inadequate to the struggle, proved "the wisdom of God, and the power of God,"—and to use the daring and striking language of the apostle Paul, "the foolishness of God was wiser than men, and the weakness of God was stronger than men." I ask for its enemies, and I am shown their graves. I ask for its friends, "and lo, a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." I ask for the mighty Leader of this innumerable host, and am answered by a universal shout from heaven and earth, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever." Thus it establishes its pretensions as a system; and thus it clothes its ministry with magnificence and glory—with energy and triumph—arising out of the divinity of its institution.

V.—THE CONNECTION OF THE MINISTRY WITH DIVINE REVELATION.

BY THE REV. W. B. COLLYER, D. D.

It is connected with a divine revelation. The apostles were not only ordained to preach, but instructed what to say. "These things," said Jesus, at the close of his own personal instructions, and when he was upon the point of leaving his disciples, "have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." They were commanded, therefore, to "wait for the promise of the Father," and to "tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until they were endued with power from on high." They did so—and "when the day of Pentecost was fully come"—received superhuman endowments as the pledge that they were

illuminated with supernatural wisdom. Accordingly the apostle Paul lays claim to this inspiration. "As it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."—"Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God; which things also we speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." With them these communications were not permitted to die; but were committed to writing; and are transmitted to us. It is evident, that what is thus revealed, must maintain its power alike in every age. It is only necessary to prove its authenticity in order to establish its authority. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." "Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it."

Indeed, on any other principle, the ministry would have been as needless, as it must have proved powerless. To render it availing, it behooved that its appointment of God should be accompanied by a revelation from God. There had been already enough, and more than enough of conjecture, on the awful topics to which preaching professedly relates. Mighty minds, in successive ages, had roused all their gigantic powers to grapple with futurity—had labored, and labored in vain, to lift the veil of the invisible world; yea, had been unable to decide satisfactorily the question of their own immortality. Neither the beautiful constitution of nature, nor the strongest light of reason, availed them here. There was not sufficient analogy between that which is sensible and that which is spiritual, to assist the process of inquiry so as to justify any certain conclusion—and a more powerful beam was necessary to penetrate the darkness covering eternity. They resembled one of their own vessels, in that infancy of navigation. It went forth from the port, well-built, well-manned—the heart of courage was in her mariners—the arm of strength with her rowers—the head of skill and experience with her pilot. But the storm arose, and she was driven from her course. As yet the compass was not: neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on her. Of what avail then was the skill of the pilot, even if the helm obeyed his hand, in the strife of the elements, when he knew not whither to steer? Night overtook her—a gloom, deep, dense, impenetrable. The light in the ship contributed nothing to scatter the obscurity around her. Meanwhile the thunder of the breakers upon the rocks warned them that they were rapidly approaching some unknown strand. They sounded, and the fathoms diminished—they cast anchor, and wished for the day. At length it came—the morning broke from the East. At first, little could be distinguished in the twilight—a thick mist brooded upon the ocean and the land—increasing light gave some shadowy outlines—sometimes to be traced, at others mingling with the vapor, and lost in it. The sun arose—the parting mists gave the bold and beautiful cliffs to his sweet influences—it rolled to their summits, and vanished, while he crowned every headland with his splendor. Before them lay the harbor—no hostile powers appeared to repel them—and the winds and tide alike irresistibly impelled them thither. And it behooved they should enter, to escape their perils—to rest from their toils—to possess the land—and to become acquainted with the riches of the country, and the nature of its inhabitants. Such, then, is our relative position to the heathen world, as day is to night. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." "Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." But "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." We must enter the port of death, before we can either know the country, or mingle with its inhabitants.

VI.—THE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM JAY.

It has been remarked, that the office of a lawyer is important because it watches over our property; and the office of a

physician much more so, because it guards our health; "For the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment." But even these are nothing to the soul and eternity; the soul and eternity alone are absolutely great; yet to *these* our office is appropriated, by these it is infinitely dignified. What, my young brother, can equal the mission which you have received of the Lord Jesus, "to testify the gospel of the grace of God," and "to show unto men the way of salvation?" No angel ever came from heaven to earth on so mighty an errand as yours—"I send thee," says the Lord Jesus, "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and the power of Satan unto God:" "that they might receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." *Your* aim is nothing less than to rescue guilty and depraved, yet immortal beings, from the lowest hell, and conduct them to the heaven of heavens; to transform them from the resemblance of the devil, into the perfection of the image of the invisible God. And when all the labors of other professors will be annihilated; when the finest paintings, the sublimest statues, the most durable monuments, the pyramids of Egypt; when the immortal works (so are they called) of philosophers, legislators, historians, poets, shall be consumed; and the earth and all that is therein shall be burned up; the effects of your tears, and studies, and visiting, and praying, and preaching, shall remain. And when every other relation now existing is destroyed, and the race of men will never blend again as masters and servants, as princes and subjects, as parents and children, as husbands and wives; the relation which has been formed and publicly ratified between you and this people, will be indissoluble. And when they die, or when you are dying, "What is your hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even they in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for they are your glory and joy." I know not how to leave this article, or how to do any thing like justice to it. It is, my dear brother, the sublime and the momentous *end* of your function that reflects so much honor, and fastens so much importance upon it. Things common or mean in themselves may acquire unspeakable excellence and grandeur by association and destiny. Your office is frequently held forth in the scriptures by images derived from employments abstractedly rather humble than glorious; but the weight it acquires from relation and design is never for a moment left out. You are "a soldier," but it is in "the good fight of faith"—you are "a fisher," but "a fisher of men"—you are "a laborer," but a "laborer together with God"—you are "a builder," but it is in "God's building"—you are "a watchman," but you "watch for souls."

"You watch for SOULS, for whom the Lord
Did heavenly bliss forego;
For SOULS that must forever live
In raptures or in wo."

Thus a small insignificant piece of paper is converted into a bank-note, and by a sovereign impression becomes current for a thousand pounds. Thus Raphael took a scroll of canvass, of which the weaver thought nothing, and the vender nothing, but he threw down upon it his immortal tints, and bade it become the admiration of the world. And thus, sir, your office rises into ineffable greatness, by taking the soul of man for its subject, and eternity for its aim.

VII.—LEARNING OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

BY THE REV. JOHN HARRIS, D. D.

1. LET me remark, that *the desirableness of ministerial education is predetermined by the natural activity of the human mind, and by the tendency of the gospel to excite that activity.* A variety of circumstances may concur to repress the active tendencies of the mind; but let the gospel obtain admission into it, and from that moment, the most torpid specimen of humanity is quickened into a new mental as well as moral life. Even the mind which was previously alive and vigorous, becomes conscious of a new impulse to activity, and of a new sphere in which to spend it. In finding a God, he finds the centre of all things; and henceforth the tendency of his mind is ever to harmonize the discordant, to arrange the displaced, and to assign to every thing its right position in the great circle which surrounds the Deity. In finding "the truth," he finds an infallible standard by which every thing is to be tested; henceforth he would fain try every pretension, weigh every claim, by its

relation to this standard, and estimate every thing accordingly. And as the volume of nature is written in illuminated characters and pictured forms, purposely to awaken early curiosity, and to excite the inquiry, "what meaneth this?" so the volume of inspiration is constructed expressly to stimulate the activity of the renewed mind. Yes, the Bible is distinguished from every other book professedly divine—from the Shasters of the Brahmin, and the Koran of Mahomet—by its earnest commendations of knowledge, and by its power of exciting a thirst for it. It at once creates light, and courts it. Not only does it extol knowledge as a glory, but commands us to seek for it as a most sacred duty. But if Christianity thus awakens the mental and moral activity of man, and if the education we advocate consists in sustaining that activity and directing it aright, the desirableness of such education is no longer a doubtful question. It is an adjudged case; a settled question; settled, by no arbitration of ours, but by the predeterminate counsel of him who gave to our mental constitution its activity, and to the Bible the power of arousing that activity. Unless, therefore, you do violence to the mind, and repress its activity, education to some extent becomes a religious necessity. And if education be thus desirable for every inquiring Christian mind, how much more important must it be for the man of God, who, in his public ministry, is, in effect, to aid in directing the religious education of others!

2. The importance of the education we advocate arises, secondly, *from the nature and contents of the Bible, and from the relation which the Christian minister sustains to it.* Revealed theology comes to us in a volume consisting of a number of ancient books in the Hebrew and Greek languages. Is it any thing more than an act of ordinary propriety for its professed expounder to endeavor to make himself acquainted with all that it contains? then must he be able to read it in the original tongues, and to avail himself of the ever-increasing treasures of sacred philology. The allusive and pictorial style of the sacred scriptures renders indispensable a knowledge of geography and chronology, of oriental customs, institutions, and imagery. Nor can the professed expounder of the word of God be safely or consistently left in ignorance of the history of biblical interpretation; showing, as it does, that the doctrinal theology of the church has always stood in close relationship to its hermeneutics.

The Bible insists on the doctrines of human depravity and ruin. The history of the ancient world is one unbroken record of facts illustrative of this doctrine. An acquaintance with that history gives a depth to the meaning of the apostle in that sketch of the monster-man in his first chapter to the Romans, which no one ignorant of the ancient world can ever perceive; shows that man, so far from ameliorating his moral condition, exhibited an invariable tendency to become worse and worse; that the highest point of the world's civilization, was the lowest point of its morality; that so far from reason or philosophy leading men to God, the religion which it constructed and decorated for them uniformly proved their greatest curse; that Christianity came into the midst of the world's systems, with all the freshness and originality of a divine conception direct from heaven; that the character of Christ took the world by surprise, as the pure and perfect incarnation of infinite excellence; that his advent was almost as necessary to save the world from temporal, as from eternal ruin. And shall all this remain unknown to the man of God? Give him an opportunity of acquiring the learned languages, and you furnish him with a key to the knowledge of the whole.

The study of language, indeed, has a value of its own. When pursued into its philosophy, it is both a mental discipline, an invigorating logical exercise, and is the study of mind itself. And on this independent ground alone, even were it devoid of all other advantage, we should be justified in urging the cultivation of the study. But when it is remembered that the knowledge of the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, besides giving the student access to the original scriptures, opens to him the temples of ancient philosophy and worship, enabling him to see for himself the necessity, the evidence, and the influence of divine revelation; places before him the writings of the Greek and Latin fathers—that armory of the Traditionists—with the power of extracting the useful, and of rejecting the vile; that it enables him to consult the valuable, the invaluable theological treatises to be found in the Latin

works of foreign divines who have flourished since the Reformation; and that these are only some of its advantages—who does not feel the great importance of linguistic studies for the future expounder of the word of God?

The Bible abounds with *prophecies* relative to the monarchies of the ancient world, and to the church of God. These prophecies were recorded, of course, that, when they came to pass, we might believe. Many of them have come to pass; and the question arises, shall their fulfilment be known? Shall this part of the temple of truth be shut up and useless; or shall it be opened, admired, and worshipped in? Here is an important branch of evidence for the truth of divine revelation; shall it lie waste and useless? shall God have spoken in vain? or shall his voice be heard? But if the man of God *is* to hear it, he must know something of ancient and modern history, that, by comparing the prophecy with the event, he may perceive its completion.

The church of God also has a history of its own. That part of its history recorded in the Bible is written for our instruction. But the record of its history did not end with what is there written; it has been continually carried on in laws and monuments, medals and inscriptions, memorials and documents of all kinds; and is replete with interest and instruction down to the present moment. Shall the whole exist in vain? Shall the past heresies and errors of the church afford no warning? shall its sins and apostacies excite no penitence? its divine preservation in the flames of persecution, no gratitude? its gradual corruption, no illustration of the New Testament prophecies concerning "the man of sin?" Shall its reformation excite no sense of obligation? nor the divine interpositions for its deliverances, its purification and enlargement, no trust and zeal for the future? But all this—if it is to be turned to a profitable account—supposes a knowledge of *ecclesiastical* history.

To say that *natural science* may be made highly subservient to Christian theology, is only to say, in other words, that the God of nature is also the God of grace. Nature, with all her myriad voices, is ever lecturing on the existence, the providence, and the agency of God. All that has ever been written on the subject, from the writings of Aristotle to the Bridgewater Treatises, is only a comment on the sublime address of the Deity himself, in the concluding portion of the book of Job. We believe, indeed, that all nature and providence are in strict analogy to religion—that all the works and ways of God are his own exposition of his word. What an important use has Butler made of this idea in his well-known Analogy! And we believe that hereafter it will be seen, that the universe was only a vast temple with the cross standing in the centre, and that to that centre every object and event was related and subordinated; that it never moved, but all things fell into its train; never stood, but they all bowed down before it; never spoke, but they all echoed its voice; and that the sight, when beheld in the light of eternity, will fill all heaven with adoration. But we would have the preacher of the cross to see something of it now; and hence we would have him to be so far acquainted with the constitution and course of nature as to feel the eminence on which he stands, and to be able, as he looks down from that eminence, to point out, with holy triumph, how all things are doing homage to the gospel now.

VIII.—QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY.

BY THE REV. W. B. COLLYER, D. D.

It will by no means follow that every man, however distinguished for piety, is fitted for the work of the ministry. Talents of a peculiar description are essential to its proper and successful discharge. And we are prepared to carry the sentiment still further, by maintaining, that even learning and intellectual endowments, when combined with undoubted piety, are not sufficient. There must be superadded an aptitude to teach, demanded for the ministry by the apostle himself; ability, arising as well from facility of communication, and the power of instruction, as from the extent of original capacity and the acquisitions of assiduous cultivation. It is quite evident, that talents thus appropriated to this arduous and responsible office, must come from Him, whose infinity impresses upon all his works an unbounded variety, and no less upon the physical, in

tellectual, moral, and spiritual constitution of man. And in seriously examining that which is supposed to be a call to the work of the ministry, both on the part of the individuals themselves, and of those who encourage them to undertake so awful an engagement, it would be well to ascertain these concurrent circumstances: since the designation is to be gathered, not from any isolated consideration, but from the harmony and agreement of imparted powers, of sincere motives, and of genuine piety, with what are collaterally regarded as providential indications. Whom God appoints to any work he duly qualifies for it.

It is desirable that those who are distinguished by superior natural talents, and a corresponding aptitude of imparting their intelligence to others, should have an opportunity of self-cultivation, before they undertake the important office of preaching: that at least they themselves should not sink below the level of general information, in a day of diffusive knowledge like the present, when their assumed station is one of conspicuous elevation. Even Apollos, eloquent and devoted to God, required to be taught more perfectly the truths which he was anxious to communicate; and sat cheerfully at the feet of those who were both willing and able to instruct him.

We are quite ready to grant, that many eminent and useful men, under the influence of genuine piety and natural ability, have been as distinguished as successful in the ministry; and we concede that there is no comparison between such original endowments and the mere acquisitions of human literature—but they who would infer thence the inutility of learning, will do well to consider, that for the knowledge so universally distributed, mankind are indebted to the means decried; and that without these, the scriptures themselves, inaccessible in their original tongues, had been a fountain sealed.

If it be not only desirable, but necessary, that the intellectual qualifications for the ministry should do more than merely keep pace with the prevailing march of intellect —means must be furnished to this end—and the means thus providentially supplied, must be conscientiously and diligently employed. Never was miracle wrought for he mere sake of miracle. Even in an age when they were given expressly as demonstrations of the reality of the truths asserted, they were associated with some commanding occasion, some self-evident utility. Tongues were for a sign—but it was that every one might hear them declare, in his own language, the tidings of salvation. Demoniacs were to be dispossessed—the sick were to be healed—the deaf were to hear—the blind were to see—the lame were to walk—the dead were to be raised—to bind the breaking heart of a father—to rekindle for the widowed mother the coal which was quenched—to restore to the affectionate family at Bethany its ornament and support. If bread was multiplied, it was to feed the hungry; if water was turned into wine, it was to do especial honor to an institution originated even in Paradise, and by the Creator himself. Every instance of miraculous operation contemplated some signal benefit to man, locally and at the time, as well as abstractedly in its inevitable demonstration of supernatural agency; and it would seem obtained then, and then only, when ordinary resources failed, and when no other means of supply or relief presented themselves. It was necessary that the Israelites should be miraculously supported during their march through the desert from Egypt to Canaan, but the miracle terminated with its necessity. "And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." Even in conjunction with miraculous communications, the ordinary means furnished by Providence were diligently employed—and the institution and superintendence of the sons of the prophets, from Samuel upward, present us with the edifying spectacle and example of those who were selected for religious services, waiting their individual appointment in the exercise of diligent and prayerful preparation. Timothy, the highly, the spiritually endowed, after the undoubted bestowment of more than ordinary gifts, was expected to avail himself of these natural and providential means. "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give

thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."

IX.—ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE TO BEAR ON THE MINISTRY.

BY THE REV. J. G. PIKE.

Let all your efforts in the acquisition of knowledge have a reference to the ministry. Universal knowledge no one can acquire. It is, therefore, real wisdom to pursue knowledge in those branches which will tend to most practical utility in the situations we occupy. Be not very intent on those branches of learning that have little reference to your great work, but follow those which will promote your usefulness. Especially, never neglect the duties of the ministry to acquire comparatively useless learning. Study not for gratification, but for the glory of Christ and the salvation of men. On this subject, Doddridge, in a letter to a friend, remarked, "Let us remember, that we are to place our point of life, not in an attempt to know or to do every thing, which would certainly be as unsuccessful as extravagant; but in a care to do that well, which providence has assigned us in our peculiar sphere. As I am a minister, I could not answer it to God or to my own conscience, if I were to spend a great deal of time in studying the depths of the law, or in the more entertaining, though less useful pursuit of a nice criticism of classical writers. I would not entirely be a stranger to these things, and there are twenty others I would just look into, although each of them alone, or indeed any single branch of either, might be the employment of a much longer life than I can imagine Providence has assigned to me—and should I suffer my few sheep in the wilderness to go astray, in an ignorance of their Bible, and in a stupid neglect of their eternal salvation, while I was too busy to reclaim them, God would call it but a laborious idleness; and I must give up my account with shame and confusion." A modern writer, who ranks high in the established church, remarks, "Believe it, the pride of human knowledge indisposes more to the humbling truths and precepts of the Christian ministry, than almost any other passion. The soul is barren, the heart is filled with vanity, the habits are worldly. A literary spirit in a minister of Christ, is direct rebellion against the first claims of his high office. The spirit of the servant of God is not literature, but piety; not vanity and conceit, but lowliness of heart; not idle curiosity, but sound and solid knowledge; not philosophy, but the Bible; not the pursuit of natural discoveries, but the care of souls, the glory of Christ, the progress of the gospel; not science, but salvation."

X.—ON MINISTERIAL STUDY.

BY THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

But what, and how are ministers to study? The answer to this question depends upon another. What is the chief object of their studies? It is to make them not merely scholars, but ministers thoroughly furnished for their office. The particulars I aim at in placing them with my tutor, are such as follow:—

1. An orderly, connected, and comprehensive knowledge of the common-places and topics of divinity, considered as a whole; a system of truth, of which the holy scripture is the sole fountain, treasury, and standard.

2. A competent acquaintance with sacred literature; by which, I mean such writings, ancient and modern, as are helpful to explain or elucidate difficulties in scripture, arising from phraseology, from allusions to customs and events not generally known, and from similar causes, and which, therefore, cannot be well understood without such assistance.

3. Such a general knowledge of philosophy, history, and other branches of polite literature, as may increase the stock of their ideas, afford them just conceptions of the state of things around them, furnish them with a fund for variety, enlargement, and illustration, that they may be able to enliven and diversify their discourses, which, without such a fund, will be soon apt to run in a beaten track, and to contain little more than a repetition of the same leading thoughts, without originality or spirit.

4. An ability to methodize, combine, distinguish, and distribute the ideas thus

collected by study, so as readily to know what is properly adapted to the several subjects to be treated of, and to the several parts of the same subject. When the pupils are thus far accomplished, then I shall hope,

5. That they will, in good time, be able to preach extempore. I do not mean without forethought or plan, but without a book, and without the excessive labor of committing their discourses to memory. This ability of speaking to an auditory in a pertinent and collected manner, with freedom and decorum, with fidelity and tenderness, looking at them, instead of looking at a paper, gives a preacher a considerable advantage, and has a peculiar tendency to command and engage the attention. It likewise saves much time, which might be usefully employed in visiting his people. It is undoubtedly a gift of God; but, like many other gifts, is to be sought not only by prayer, but in the use of means. The first essays will ordinarily be weak and imperfect, but the facility increases, till at length a habit is formed by diligence and perseverance. I should not think my academy complete, unless my tutor was attentive to form his pupils to the character of public speakers. General rules admit of exceptions.—I have myself known persons, who, with plain sense, true humility, and a spirit devoted to the Lord, and dependent upon him, have, with little or no assistance from men, proved solid, exemplary, and useful ministers. Such instances convince me that, however expedient learning may be, it is not indispensably necessary for a minister, especially for one who is to labor in a retired situation, and amongst plain, unlettered hearers. I would not, therefore, preclude my tutor from all opportunity of being useful to persons of this description, who would be glad of such helps from him as they might receive in their mother tongue, when the time of life, or particular circumstances, might render the study of languages and science inconvenient. And in general, as the capacities, dispositions, and prospects of a number of pupils would, of course, be different, I should leave it to his discretion, to conduct them to the same grand ends of service, by such difference of method as he should judge most suitable to each; so as not to discourage or overburden the truly deserving, nor to permit, if it can be prevented, the more studious and successful, to set too high a value upon their superior accomplishments. For after all, it must be owned, and ought to be remembered, that grace and divine wisdom are of unspeakably greater importance than scholastic attainments without them. We are sure, that though a man had the knowledge of all mysteries, the gifts of tongues and miracles, and the powers of an angel, if he has not likewise humility, spirituality, and love, he is, in the sight of God, but as sounding brass, or a noisy cymbal. He may answer the purpose of a church bell, to call a congregation together, but has little prospect of doing them good when they are assembled.

XI.—IN THE CALL TO THE MINISTRY

BY THE REV. ADAM CLARKE, LL. D.

It is the prerogative of God, both to call and qualify a man to be a successful preacher of his word. All men are not thus called. Among the millions professing Christianity, very few are employed in the work of the ministry in the ordinary course of providence; and still fewer by especial call. A regular established ministry of pure Christianity, in any country, is an ineffable blessing; for by it the form at least of true religion will be preserved. Such a ministry God furnishes in the regular order of his providence; and its fruits are his ordinary work. But there is a power as well as form of godliness—a soul, as well as a body of religion; and, to produce this is God's extraordinary work; and to produce it, he not only communicates extraordinary influence, but employs extraordinary means. In this work God often "chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty; and the base things of the world and things that are despised, and the things that are not, hath he chosen, to bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh might glory in his presence." That there are such dispensations in providence and grace, the whole history of the church proves; and every revival of religion is the proof of the dispensation of an extraordinary influence; for in such outpourings of God's Spirit, we ever find extraordinary means and instruments used. You are

either among these ordinary or extraordinary messengers; and you have either an ordinary or extraordinary call. But as you belong not, as a Christian minister, to any established form of religion in the land, you are an extraordinary messenger, or no minister at all; and you have either an extraordinary call, or you have no call whatever. It is a matter of the utmost consequence to be thoroughly satisfied on this point. No man should engage in the work in which you are engaged, unless he verily feel that he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him this office. He must not presume that he is thus moved because he has been educated for the ministry; in cases of this kind, man may propose but God must dispose. He may, indeed, be a minister, in the ordinary course of God's providence, as has been already stated; and God may choose one thus educated to be an extraordinary messenger, to revive his work in the earth. Thus was your founder chosen, qualified, and sent forth. But what could his single arm effect? God, therefore, gave him, as helpers, men called and qualified by himself, to do that extraordinary work, so beneficial, not only to Great Britain, but also to a great part of the civilized world, and even to heathen countries. These men all testified, that they had an extraordinary call to do an extraordinary work, by extraordinary assistance. The immense multitudes of souls, converted from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; the general diffusion of scriptural Christianity throughout the land, producing love to God and man, due submission to all lawful authority, and the most cordial respect to every moral precept; were the proofs that they had not mistaken their call, and that God had not withheld his extraordinary influence. Persuaded that they had an extraordinary call to convert transgressors, to lead them to Christ Jesus, that they might be justified by faith in his blood, and afterwards to build them up on their most holy faith, they constantly depended on God, sought and expected from him extraordinary assistance, and thus lived in the constant exercise of the spirit of faith, piety, and prayer. You will copy their example, and be owned of God as they were owned, if you walk by the same rule and mind the same thing. I hold this to be a matter of prime importance; for long experience has shown me, that he among us who is not convinced that he has an extraordinary call to the ministry, will never seek for extraordinary help, will sink under discouragement and persecutions; and, consequently, far from being a light of the world, will be as salt without savor, and in our connection, a slothful, if not a wicked servant, who should be cast out of the sacred fold, as an encumberer of the inheritance of the Lord.

XII.—ON THE CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

BY THE REV. JOHN EADES.

THE nature of, or what is meant by this call, wherein it consists, and by what it may be known and distinguished, to the comfort of its partaker, and the satisfaction of any church of Christ. This will appear by attending to the following proposition. That all those who are inwardly called of God to the sacred office, as well as qualified, according to the rules laid down in the divine word, have laid to heart the spiritual necessities of their fellow-creatures; are willing, ready, and desirous, like their blessed Lord, to undertake the work; not from any selfish or worldly motive, but from a principle of glorifying God, in the conversion, edification, and salvation of precious and immortal souls. This may briefly be summed up and comprehended in two words, the disposition and the principle.

I. *The disposition.* This is Christ-like; he laid to heart the spiritual necessities of his hearers. The disposition of soul which our Lord Jesus Christ discovered in the days of his flesh towards poor sinners, must, in a greater or less degree, be found in all those who are inwardly called of God to the sacred office. "When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd," Matt. ix. 36. "He had compassion on the ignorant, and on them that were out of the way," Heb. v. 2. As God-man, every spiritual, divine, holy, and heavenly temper and disposition, is found in him, in the highest degree; as such, he must infinitely excel all human and angelic beings in every perfection: but if we search the whole scriptures we shall find

no disposition of soul more conspicuous than his compassion. It is not intended here to wander from the subject; but would we know the original moving cause of all spiritual and eternal blessings, would we inquire the reason why he undertook and executed the wonderful and all-important plan of our redemption and salvation; why he continues at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, carrying on the same glorious design; and why he will continue till the whole of his redeemed are with him where he is, to behold and enjoy his glory? It is answered in one word, compassion; and it was the same compassion which moved his heart, which made his bowels yearn over the fainting multitude, who "were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd," Matt. ix. 36, Mark vi. 34, and were in destitute, forlorn, melancholy circumstances; but the famine among them was not more of bread and of water than of hearing the word; they were in danger every moment of becoming a prey to the roaring lion, who goeth "about, seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8. It was this which occasioned his affecting speech to his disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest," Matt. ix. 37, 38; Luke x. 2. There was a blessed prospect of precious souls being ripened and prepared for glory, but laborers were few; few that loved the work, and were willing, like the apostle, 2 Cor. xii. 15, to "spend and be spent for Christ and souls;" for this reason they must pray. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest;" as though he had said, finding things in such melancholy circumstances, the misery of mankind around so great, and yet beholding such a prospect, Go to my heavenly Father, "his tender mercies are over all his works," but especially over his church; go and tell him the case; tell him how it stands, that precious souls are flocking to hear the word, that they are all attention, that it seems as though they longed to know the things concerning their peace; but they want teachers, they want instruction, they want the gospel; tell him, that he is "the Lord of the harvest;" the harvest is his; it is he who sends forth laborers; and he expects that you should ask, he commands you to inquire for all those things which are needful for yourselves or your hearers; make this your plea, O thou Father of mercies, thou art the Lord of the harvest, how shall the harvest be gathered in? how wilt thou get glory to thy most adorable name? "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth," Exod. xxxiv. 6, without the use of those means, and the administration of those ordinances, which thou thyself, in thine own infinite wisdom, love, and goodness, hast been pleased to appoint, and most graciously promised to bless, for the glorious purposes which thou hast designed? Hence it appears, that our Lord Jesus Christ was deeply affected with the ruin and misery of fallen man; like the good Samaritan, he laid their case to heart, and this influenced all his actions towards them; the same should be the case with all his followers, but especially his ministers: this should appear, by their being willing, ready, and desirous to engage in the work. The call of Christ to his office, as mediator in general, and as the chief shepherd and bishop of souls in particular, affords a perfect rule for all his ministers in this respect; when his heavenly Father, and the holy and eternal Spirit, in the counsels of peace, proposed the grand and glorious question, on which all our salvation depended, whether he would give "his soul an offering for sin," Isa. liii. 10, his answer was, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God," Heb. x. 7. He was not only able, but willing, ready, and desirous to engage in the work; "I delight," says the altogether lovely, "to do thy will, O my God; yea; thy law is within my heart, in the midst of my bowels; I have preached righteousness, in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest," Psalm xl. 8, 9. It is true, some of the best of men under the Old and New Testament, through mistrust or unbelief, have been greatly harassed and perplexed with doubts and fears, as well as backward and reluctant on the one hand, or, from a sense of the greatness of the work on the other, have been as it were overwhelmed in the view and prospect of it. Hence we hear the very man, who was meek above all the men upon the earth, we hear even a Moses complaining, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue; send, I pray thee, by the

hand of him whom thou wilt send," Exod. iv. 10, 13. Here we find the Lord's anger was kindled against his servant Moses; from which it is manifest, that there must be something sinful in the objections he made time after time, amidst the repeated proofs that God had given of his power, presence, and faithfulness, which appear to have arisen from unbelief, distrust, and the fear of man. Again, we hear of Jeremiah's crying out, "Ah, Lord, I cannot speak, for I am a child," Jer. i. 6. And even the man who "was caught up into paradise," "to the third heaven," 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4, has put the humbling, creature-debasing, God-exalting, weighty and important question, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And it is a great mercy to be truly sensible of our own insufficiency; without this conviction, we shall never depend as we ought upon the all-sufficiency of the great and glorious head of the church, the chief Shepherd and bishop of souls. Notwithstanding what we have said here, those who know themselves, the nature of fallen man, the spirituality of the blessed gospel, the various trials and afflictions which every faithful minister of Jesus Christ is exposed to, both from within and without, will not so much wonder at the backwardness and aversion which arise in the mind, contrary to the call and will of God; but in proportion to the conviction a sincere Christian has of his being called of God to the work and office of the gospel ministry, all this reluctance, from whatever quarter it arises, is turned sooner or later into obedience, willingness, and trust: the gracious promise of divine assistance, that accompanies the call itself, as a token of the good pleasure of God, is an immoveable basis for his soul to rest upon. "Certainly I will be with thee;" "to deliver thee, saith the Lord," Exod. iii. 12; Jer. i. 8. "Lo, I am with you alway," (says the gracious and omnipresent Redeemer,) "even unto the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 20, (but this promise is intended to be more fully opened, when we come to that part of our work which relates to the spirit of preaching.) This makes the soul, as Isaiah, when his lips were touched with a live coal from the altar, ready and desirous to undertake the office, to walk, to run; or, like the seraphim, to fly on his errands; "Here am I, Lord, send me," Isa. vi. 6–8. This promise bears down all opposition before it, and makes a person willing to "spend and be spent" in the service of so good, so great, and glorious a master. This is a temper of mind required in all that are called to the office, "not by constraint," says the apostle, "but willingly," 1 Pet. v. 2. Our duty should be our delight, our work, our pleasure; the interest, the honor, and glory of Christ, and the happiness of his church, "the joy and rejoicing of our hearts." But this leads us to examine,

II. *The principle* from whence this disposition of mind, this inclination and affection to the work, must spring, before a man can be said to be inwardly called and chosen of God to the sacred office of the gospel ministry.

1. Not from any selfish or worldly motive, "Not by constraint," says the apostle, 1 Pet. v. 2; neither friends, relations, interest, nor any thing whatever, that hath any tendency to bias the mind, should have the least weight or influence in this respect; see 1 Sam. ii. 36. "Not for filthy lucre's sake," say the two great apostles, 1 Tim. iii. 3; Titus i. 7, 11; 1 Pet. v. 2; i. e. any worldly profit or outward advantage, that may arise from such an office; not with any covetous view, called "filthy lucre," because it defileth the soul who is under its influence. We are told, in Mich. iii. 11, that "the false prophets divine for money;" this was a proof that they were not sent of God, "yet," says the prophet, "will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us?" We now come to consider,

2. That all those who are inwardly called to the work engage in it from a principle of glorifying God, in the conversion edification, and salvation of precious and immortal souls.

We are authorized from the divine word to declare, without the least hesitation, that whoever is qualified, according to the rules laid down in the holy scriptures, and falls in with this grand design, in heart and life, is a true minister of Jesus Christ: Christ himself appeals to this, both for the reality and divinity of his message and mission "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true," John vii. 18. Christ's "meat was to do the will of his heavenly Father, and to finish his work," John iv. 34. When he called his

disciples, the language he made use of was, "Follow me;" and so in effect he now says to all those whom he calls to the work of the ministry, "Follow me;" not only as a Christian, "let the same mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," Phil. ii. 5, but as a minister, I leave you a perfect example, to aim to live and preach as I did.

XIII.—REFLECTIONS OF A CANDIDATE FOR THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE.

BY THE REV. JOHN BROWN, OF HADDINGTON.

Dost thou, my soul, desire the office of a bishop of souls, a minister of Christ? Examine with deep concern thy preparation for thy call to, and thy end in, offering thyself to this important work.

Am I a real Christian? or am I a devil, a dissembler with God and men, an entertainer of sin—of Satan, in my heart? Am I circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, having my corrupt nature renewed, old things passed away, and all things become new? Do I worship God in the spirit; read, meditate, pray, converse, under the influence of the Holy Ghost? Do I certainly know what Christ is to me? Do I rejoice in what he is in himself, and what he is to, and hath done for and in me? Have I no confidence in the flesh, in my righteousness, my learning, my address? Hath the Holy Ghost emptied me of self in every form, till he hath made me poor in spirit, less than the least of all saints in my own sight? Hath he, with a strong hand, instructed me to count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus as *my* Lord; and to count them but dung to win him, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith? Do I earnestly desire to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings; and press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? What furniture of gifts hath Christ bestowed on me? what aptness to teach? what knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom? what skill to instruct others, bringing out of my treasure things new and old? what ability to make the deep things of God obvious to the weaker capacities? what proper quickness of conception? what proper inclination to study, as one devoted to matters of infinite consequence? what peculiar fitness for the pulpit, qualifying me to commend myself to every man's conscience, preaching not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power? With what stock of self-experienced texts, and principles of inspiration, am I entering on the tremendous office? Of what truths, relative to the law of God and its threatenings; relative to sin, to Satan, and to divine desertion; hath my saddened soul felt the power, tasting the wormwood and the gall? Of what declarations and promises of grace have I tasted, and seen that God is good? What cords of infinite love have caught and held my heart? What oracles of heaven have I found and eaten; and they have been to me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart? Of what truths, what texts, could I now say, "I believe, and therefore I speak?" what I have heard with the Father, what I have seen, and heard, and tasted, and handled of the word of life, that declare I unto you.

Suppose my connections with the great, my address to the people, should ever so easily procure a license, a charge, yet, if I run unsent of Christ, in my whole ministration I must act the part of a thief, a robber, a traitor to Christ, and murderer of souls, not profiting them at all! If, without his commission, I enter the office, what direction, what support, what comfort, what acceptance, what reward, can I expect in and of my work? Say then, my conscience, as thou shalt answer at the judgment-seat of God, am I taking this honor to myself? or am I called of God, as Aaron was? Is Christ sending me, and laying a necessity upon me to preach the gospel? While he determines me to follow providence, and take no irregular step towards thrusting myself into the office, is he breathing on my soul, and causing me to receive the Holy Ghost? Is he endowing me with deep compassion to the souls of men; and with a deep sense of my own unfitness, and earnest desire to be sanctified and made meet for the master's use? In the progress of my education, am I going bound up in the spirit, with the love of Christ burning in my heart, and constraining me; rendering me cheerfully willing to suffer poverty, contempt, and hatred of all men, for Christ's name's sake; willing, if possible, to risk my

own salvation in winning others to Christ? What scriptures have directed and encouraged me to this work? In what form doth Jesus seem to be giving me my commission? Whether "to open the eyes of the Gentiles, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified?" or to "go, make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes?" What promise of Christ's presence with, and assistance in, my work, have I received from above?

What is mine end in my advances towards this work? Dare I appeal to him that searcheth my heart, and trieth my reins—to him who will quickly be my judge, that I seek not great things to myself; that I covet no man's silver, gold, or apparel; that I seek not theirs but them; that neither of men seek I glory; that I look not on mine own things, but on the things of Christ; that I seek not mine own honor, but the honor of him that sends me?

Have I considered diligently what is before me; or am I running blindfold on the tremendous charge? Have I considered the nature and circumstances of the ministerial work, or that therein I am to be an ambassador for Christ, to beseech perishing souls on the brink of hell, to be reconciled unto God? A steward of the mysteries and manifold grace of God; that, at the infinite hazard of my soul, it is required of me to be faithful; that, in my ministrations, I, with all humility and many tears, serve the Lord with my spirit, in the gospel of his Son; keep back no part of the counsel of God, no instruction, no reproof, no encouragement; that I testify repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; not moved with reproach, persecution, hunger, or nakedness; nor even count my life dear unto me, if so be I may finish my course with joy; ready not only to be bound, but to die for the name of Jesus; willing rather to be ruined with Christ, than to reign with emperors; that I labor with much fear and trembling, determined to know, to glory in, and to make known, nothing but Christ and him crucified; not with enticing words of man's wisdom as a man pleaser, but with great plainness of speech, in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power—speaking the things freely given to me of God by his Spirit, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and having the mind of Christ; always triumphing in Christ, and making manifest the savor of his knowledge in every place; being to God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish; as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God, speaking in Christ; through the mercy of God, not fainting but renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God; not preaching myself, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and myself a servant to the Church, for Jesus' sake; always bearing about the dying of the Lord, that his life may be made manifest in me. Knowing the terror of the Lord, and his future judgment, I must persuade men, making myself manifest to God and to their conscience; constrained with the love of Christ, must change my voice, and turn myself every way, to bring sinners to the tree of life; jealous over them with a godly jealousy, and espousing them as chaste virgins to Christ; travailing in birth till Christ be formed in them; must take heed to my ministry which I have received in the Lord, that I fulfil it; give myself wholly to reading, exhortation, and doctrine, taking heed to myself and doctrine, that I may save myself and them that hear me; watching for their souls as one that must give an account; rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving every man his portion in due season; faithfully warning every man, and teaching every man, and laboring to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus; and warring, not after the flesh, nor with weapons of warfare that are carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds and casting down of imaginations, and subduing every thought and affection to the obedience of Christ. Having Christ Jesus for the end of my conversation, and holding fast the form of sound words in faith and love, which is in him. I must go forth without the camp, bearing his reproach, and feeding the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made me an overseer, and which God hath purchased with his own blood; preaching sound doctrine in faith and verity—taking the over

sight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being a lord over God's heritage, but as an example to the flock, exercised unto godliness; holy, just, and unblameable; an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity; fleeing youthful lusts, and following after righteousness, peace, faith, charity; avoiding foolish and unlearned questions; not striving, but being gentle to all men; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; fleeing from perverse disputings and worldly-mindedness as most dangerous snares, and following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness; fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold on eternal life; preaching the word in season and out of season; reproving, rebuking, exhorting, with all long-suffering and doctrine; keeping the trust of gospel truth and office committed to me; and committing the same to faithful men, who may be able to teach others. And, in fine, to try false teachers; rebuke, before all, such as sin openly; restore such as have been overtaken in a fault, in the spirit of meekness; and having compassion on them, to pull them out of the fire, hating the garment spotted by the flesh.

XIV.—EXPERIENCE OF THE REV. OWEN STOCKTON.

Having for some time preached freely, in some country villages near Cambridge, which wanted ministers, I found the Lord encouraging me to give up myself to the ministry of the word. My own soul was refreshed in composing my sermons; my heart was made to disrelish all other studies but that of divine things; and my labors appeared to be blessed of God. Having been chosen catechist in the university of Cambridge, in 1654, my soul was exceedingly affected by a sermon of Dr. Tuckney, our professor of divinity; in which he did, in the name of God, earnestly beseech every one of us to endeavor the increase of the church of God, by adding ourselves to it, and laboring to add others to it. This encouraged me to comply with the request of a parish in Cambridge, to give them one sermon on the Lord's day forenoon. Finding that the Lord had blessed my labors both to the students and people of the city, I gave up myself to the work of the ministry, and was solemnly set apart to it by fasting and prayer, and laying on of hands of the presbytery; to which God seemed to set his seal, by very gracious influences of his Spirit on my heart.

Not long after, I set apart a day for fasting and prayer, to ask counsel of the Lord, whether I should also preach in the afternoon at St. Andrew's church. And, by powerfully impressing on my conscience these scriptures, "I charge thee, before God, be instant in season and out of season," 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. "As much as in you lieth, feed the flock," 1 Pet. v. 2. "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, wo is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of. If I do this willingly, I have a reward," 1 Cor. ix. 16, 17. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withdraw not thine hand; for thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that," Eccles. xi. 6. "Always abounding in the work of the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58. "As we have opportunity, let us do good," Gal. vi. 10. And I was encouraged, from Isa. xli. 10, "Fear thou not; I am with thee. I will strengthen, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." "Go, teach: and lo, I am with you," Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, to help and assist you, to bless your labors, and make your work prosperous. I soon found my labor blessed. About ten months after, April, 1657, I set apart another day for fasting and prayer, that the Lord would direct me, whether to preach a week-day's sermon or not, once every fortnight, and desired the prayers of others for me in this particular. The Lord impressed on my mind these texts, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word," Acts vi. 4. "Separated unto the gospel of the grace of God; I am a debtor, so much as in me is, to preach the gospel," Rom. i. 1, 14, 15. "O thou that bringest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountains; lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up; be not afraid;" Isa. xl. 9; with Isa. lii. 7; Rom. x. 15; Acts xviii. 5, "Paul was pressed in spirit, and testified."

The following considerations were also powerfully sent home on my soul. 1. I find God much enlarging my meditations on a

subject. What can be his meaning, in watering me so much, but that I should water others? 2. I have found God wonderfully gracious to me in the afternoon sermons, which I have preached, in consequence of a like call. 3. I have solemnly given up myself to the work of preaching the gospel; wo must therefore be unto me, if I preach it not, 1 Cor. ix. 16. 4. God hath made my service here accepted of the saints; and therefore it is good to strike where and when the iron is hot. 5. I have but a short time to live; and so ought to learn of Christ, to do my work as fast as I can, John ix. 4; Eccles. ix. 10. 6. In these evil times, I may soon be cut short of such opportunities, Eph. v. 15, 16; Gal. vi. 10. 7. One soul gained by the preaching of the gospel, is more worth than the whole world, Matt. xvi. 26. 8. Christ, thrice over, chargeth Peter to feed his sheep and lambs, as an evidence of his love to him. Now I have wonderful cause to love Christ, and good reason to demonstrate my love, in whatever way he would have me, John xxi. 15, 16, 17. 9. God is glorified, when we bear much fruit, and for the edification of others, John xv. 8; Eph. iv. 11, 12. 10. God requires every man to observe and improve his proper gifts in his proper work, Rom. xii. 6, 7, 8, 11. 11. I have naturally a slothful spirit; and one way to master it, is to take up much employment. 12. God would have us abound in his work, and "our labor shall not be in vain," 1 Cor. xv. 58. 13. No excuse should hinder us now from doing good, but what will serve us at the day of judgment.

I was greatly encouraged, that God would be with me in my undertaking, from the following scriptures, "Go, teach :—lo, I am with you alway," Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. "The Lord hath chosen thee to build a house for the sanctuary: be strong and do it. Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed, for the Lord God will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord," 1 Chron. xxviii. 10, 20. "Have not I commanded thee? The Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest," Josh. i. 9. "I the Lord have called thee; I will hold thine hand," Isa. xlii. 6. "The Lord is with thee. Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel. Have not I sent thee?" Judges vi. 12, 14.

Objection I. Men will impute my preaching of the week-day's sermons to forwardness, pride, or imprudence; and will, perhaps, laugh at me. Answer 1. I must not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, no, not in "an adulterous generation," Rom. i. 16; Mark viii. 38. If I cannot suffer shame for him, how shall I suffer greater persecutions? 2. God can, and hath promised to hide me from the strife of tongues, if I trust in him, Psalm xxxi. 19, 20; Prov. xvi. 7. I commit my way and cause unto the Lord; and if I be reproached, he will one day clear me Psalm xxxvii. 5, 6. 3. If I meet with shame and reproach, for my diligence in preaching the gospel, it is no more than Christ and his apostles suffered, Heb. xii. 3; 1 Cor. iv. 9, 10, 13. 4. If I serve Christ, he will honor me; and that is infinitely better than the honor of the world, John xii. 26. 5. It will be my happiness, if I be reproached for Christ's sake, 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14. 6. That glory which I expect, should make me despise the shame, which I meet with here, in the service of God, 1 Pet. v. 4; Heb. xii. 2.

Objection II. Perhaps the people will contemn the word; I shall have but few hearers. Answer 1. The hearts of all men are in God's hand. I will leave that to the Lord, whether he will incline many or few to attend upon his word. 2. The angels did not disdain to preach Christ to a few shepherds, Luke ii. 8–11, and Christ preached the gospel to one harlot, John iv. 3. God's presence is not tied to a multitude, Matt. xviii. 20. If he but bless his word for the conversion of one soul, it is worth all our labor and pains, Mark viii. 37; James v. 19, 20. 4. I shall essay to do my work to God, and not to men; because God commands it, though men should slight it. Though the more I love and labor for them, the less I be loved, I should gladly spend myself, and be spent for them, Isa. xlix. 5; 2 Cor. xii. 15.

Being ejected from my charge at Colchester, by the Act of Uniformity, 1662, and thereafter denied liberty to preach to the people there, while the pestilence raged, and the established clergy had fled from their charge, I, as directed by God, from Isa. xxvi. 20; Gen. xxviii. 15, removed to Chatisham in Suffolk; where he favored me with frequent opportunities of preaching the gospel, and gave me some desirable suc-

cess, according to his word impressed on my soul, at my first coming there, Ezek. xxxvii. 3, 9, 10. And, notwithstanding the repeated attempts of our persecutors to apprehend me, the Lord, according to his gracious words applied to my heart, Psalm xci. 11–13; Dan. vi. 23; Psalm cxlvi. 9; Isa. lv. 12; Luke vi. 11, 12; Deut. xxxiii. 12; Psalm cix. 31; from time to time mercifully delivered me; and led me out to praise and thanksgiving, and resolution to exert myself to the utmost in his service, on this account, 2 Chron. xx. 30; Psalm xxx. 1 · 1 Chron. xxii. 17–19.

XV.—EXPERIENCE OF THE REV. THOS. HALYBURTON.

During the previous fearful anguish of my soul, I had laid aside all thoughts of the ministry. It was like hell to me, to think of preaching that to others, which I did not believe myself. But the Lord, having discovered himself to my soul, led me on to it. 1. My mother had solemnly devoted me to it from my childhood. 2. The course of my education had pointed towards it. 3. My distressful exercise of soul had frustrated my design of following the study of philosophy, and rendered it comparatively distasteful to me. 4. By the merciful issue of my dark exercises, he had removed the principal stumbling blocks out of my way. 5. By the discovery of his glory in the face of Christ, he deeply engaged my heart to the knowledge of Christ and him crucified. 6. He laid me under a deep sense of my obligation to serve him, in any work to which he should call me. 7. Meanwhile he stirred up the presbytery of Kirkcaldy, and Messrs. Forrester and Shiels, to urge and encourage me to undergo trials for license. 8. While I continued to oppose their solicitations, he began to raise a storm against me; and showed me, that I behooved to change my station. 9. The Lord made my first appearances in preaching the gospel useful towards the awakening of some and comforting of others, which did not a little confirm and encourage me.

Before my ordination at Ceres, May, 1700, I, on several occasions, solemnly searched and tried my ways, bewailed my sinfulness, accepted of Jesus Christ as "made of God to" me "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" and devoted myself to him as a Christian and a minister, depending on his grace and strength to bear me through all my work. I examined myself concerning my soundness in the faith, and the sincerity of my purposes, in undertaking the office and work of the holy ministry.

Being entered into the ministry, I prepared my sermons with much serious secret prayer for the Lord's assistance and direction, and for a blessing on the word to myself and my hearers. After my public work, I reviewed the frame of my own heart in it, and essayed thanksgiving or humiliation before the Lord, as I found cause. The watching for souls as one that must give an account, lying heavy on my spirit, I labored, by visitation of families, by catechizing, and by personal converse before administration of the Lord's supper, to acquaint myself with the spiritual state of my flock; that I might deal with their consciences, and rightly divide unto them the word of truth. Of three or four hundred persons, I found not above forty whose consciences had not been, one time or other, awakened by the word of God, and not one of them by the ministry of the curates. I saw that it was very hard to judge of the competency of persons' knowledge, in order to admission to the sacraments; and that knowing people, estranged from the power of religion, are in the most deplorable and hopeless condition. My heart was filled with heaviness and perplexity, on account of the abounding errors and profaneness of the times; and saw, that we are, therefore, called to mourning, to serious endeavors to be thoroughly established in the truths of religion, and to a shining gospel walk, as a testimony against the horrid profaneness which abounds. One reason why the gospel is so unsuccessful at this day, is because the *simplicity* of preaching is neglected. A due application of scripture is the best preaching. Though God make use of the words of men for leading into the meaning of his own, yet it is the very words of scripture by which he conveys his influences into the heart.

With respect to some particular cases, I found that fears of falling in a time of trial are a part of that thoughtfulness for the future which Christ forbids, Matt. vi. 34. They suppose trials which may never happen; and that men should have strength

for trials before they come; and that the promises of God are not to be depended on; they contradict the plain declarations of God, in 2 Cor. xii. 9; 1 Cor. x. 13. 2. I found my doubts of eternity solved, by seeing that eternity is implied in every truth of religion; and that men would be made in vain if they were not made for eternity, Psalm lxxxix. 47. 3. I found, that, in difficult steps of the ministerial work, it is very dangerous to depend much on the advice or apprehensions of the best saints, as to sin or duty in matters which belong not to their station. It is safer to desire the help of their prayers, that God, according to his promise, would direct us, than to encourage them to step out of their stations to give us advice. In consulting with others, we ought to regard them according to their different talents and circumstances. Ministers are often most shaken about the truths of religion, and private Christians most shaken about their own spiritual state. 4. To find duty in doubtful cases, we must cry to God to remove every bias from our mind, take the way which appears best, beg that God would stop us if we be wrong, and take his direction to another course, if we can perceive it. We must seek light soberly, use it tenderly, and be cautious in the application of it.

In 1702, I was revived from a long deadness by converse with lively Christians, Prov. xxvii. 17; by heavy chastisements, Psalm xciv. 12; by alarming providences respecting the public, Jonah i. 6; by reading the experiences of some noted Christians, in which I saw my own sins, and my sad short-comings, Psalm xxxii. 6; by discoveries of the vanity of my present enjoyments, Hos. ii. 7; by preaching on subjects chosen for others.

In 1708, I framed the following questions for trying myself. 1. Are daily sins of infirmity searched out, considered, and mourned over? 2. Is care taken to exercise faith distinctly, in order to the pardon of them? 3. Is peace taken, when not powerfully spoken by the Lord? 4. Doth the impression of the necessity and excellency of Christ's blood decay? 5. Are the experiences of its efficacy as distinct as ever? 6. Am I formal in God's worship, secret, private, or public? 7. Do I take due care to educate my family? 8. Are afflictions observed and duly improved? 9. Am I duly concerned for my flock, and single and diligent in prayer for them, visiting the sick? &c. 10. Have I a due sympathy with afflicted saints and churches? 11. Do I mourn over the sins of the time? 12. Do I hear the voice of God's rod, calling me to a deadness to the world, to my dearest relations, and even to life itself, and to preparation for death, and spirituality in duties?

As to my ministerial work, I had many heavy challenges, especially with respect to fervent and frequent wrestling in secret, for the success of the gospel among my people; yet it was refreshing to me, that I durst appeal to God that I was concerned to know the truth; that I durst vent none of my own conceits, nor keep back what I thought might be profitable to their souls: and that I preached that, upon which I resolved to venture my own eternal salvation, and desired to preach home to their consciences.

XVI.—SERIOUS SELF-EXAMINATION BEFORE ORDINATION.

BY THE REV. MATTHEW HENRY.

The Rev. Matthew Henry's biographer observes, in reference to this article:—"That 'Paper' is so general in its nature, and presents a combination of vigilance and wisdom so unusual and complete, as, notwithstanding the length of it, to render its insertion imperative.

"It will reprove, if not convince, of awful presumption, all such as have inconsiderately rushed into the most responsible of all offices. To those who are contemplating the ministry, or who are about to enter upon its active and arduous duties, it will prove a friendly monitor, a useful test, and an all-important directory. While, as a full exposition of Mr. Henry's own motives and principles, in reference to the same great 'work,' upon which he was then entering, it is invaluable. It shows a temper of mind so conscientious, so humble, and so enlightened, as to be perfectly apostolical. He magnified the office, but abased himself. And being unstained, visibly at least, with even the common follies of youth, the severity of his self-judgment becomes additionally observable and impressive. The sins of the heart were, in his apprehension, more humiliating than

gross acts of wickedness appear to be in the eyes of many."

That it is very requisite, he writes, for a man to examine himself seriously at such a time, will readily be granted by those who consider the nature of the ordinance, and of that work into which it is a solemn entrance.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

It is worth while for a man at such a time deliberately to ask himself, and, having asked, conscientiously to answer the six following questions:—

Q. I. *What am I?*

This is a needful question, because in ordination I give up myself to God in a peculiar manner; and will God accept the torn, and the blind, and the lame? Surely no. The sacrifice must be searched before it was offered, that it might be sure to fit its end. Now, though the truth of grace be not, perhaps, necessary to the *esse* of a minister, for Judas himself was an apostle, yet it is necessary to the *bene esse*. A man cannot be a good minister without it. And therefore come, my soul, let us inquire what am I? And let the inquiry be strict and serious, for a mistake here is fatal.

1. Have I ever been inwardly convinced of the lost and undone condition in which I was born; that I was by nature a child of wrath, even as others? Did I ever see myself wallowing in my blood, in a forlorn, outcast, helpless state, lost and ruined forever without Christ?

2. Was I ever deeply humbled before the Lord for the original sin that I was born in, and the numberless actual transgressions in heart and life that I have been guilty of? Hath sin been bitter to my soul, hath my heart been broken for it, and hath my sorrow been of the right kind? Hath the sight of a broken Saviour broken my heart?

3. Have I sincerely closed with the Lord Jesus Christ; by a true and lively faith, taken him to be mine, and resigned up myself to him to be his? Have I accepted of Christ upon gospel terms, to be my Prince to rule, and Saviour to save me? Have I renounced all others, and resolved to cleave to the Lord Jesus Christ, let what will come? Is Christ precious to me, is he dearer to me than any thing in the world besides? Could I be freely willing to part with all for Christ, and count every thing but loss that I may win Christ?

4. Have I a real hatred of every sin in myself as well as in others? Have I no beloved lust which I would have spared, no darling corruption which I would have to remain unmortified? Doth sin *appear* sin in my eyes, and can I say with David, that "I hate every false way?" Are the remainders of indwelling corruption a burden to me? Do I long to be rid of sin? Are my resolutions sincere, and my endeavors serious, against sin, and all appearances of it, and that because it is against God?

5. Have I a real love to holiness? Do I press after it, and earnestly desire to be more holy, using holy ordinances for this end, that I may be made thereby more and more holy? Am I fond of holy ordinances and holy people, and that because they are holy? Have I a real value for holiness wherever I see it? Do I delight in God's holy word, and that because it is holy? Do I call the holy sabbath a delight, and that because it is holy? Do I love the brethren because they are holy, and love them the better the more holy they are? Do I long to be made perfect in holiness in that other world?

To these weighty questions my poor soul, though compassed about with manifold weaknesses, wants, and corruptions, doth, as in the presence of God, the searcher of hearts, give a comfortable answer; and if these be the signs and characters of true grace, I trust my heart doth not deceive me when it tells me I have some sparks of it, though swimming in a sea of corruption. "But who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And yet, as if this had been but a small thing, thou hast spoken concerning thy servant for a great while yet to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God!"

Q. II. *What have I done?*

This is also a needful question, that searching and examining what hath been amiss I may repent of it, and make even reckonings in the blood of Christ, that I may not come loaded with old guilt to put on a new character, especially such a character as this. Aaron and his sons must offer a sin-offering to make atonement before they were consecrated, Lev. viii. 34. For

ne that comes near to God under the guilt of sin unrepented of, comes at his peril, and the nearer the more dangerous.

And therefore, O my soul, what have I done? My soul cannot but answer, I have sinned, I have perverted that which is right, and it hath not profited me. And in a serious reflection I cannot but observe,

1. What a great deal of precious time I have trifled away and misspent in folly and vanity, and things that do not profit. Time is a precious talent which my Master hath intrusted me with, and yet how long hath it been buried, and how much hath it run waste!

2. How many precious opportunities, which are the cream of time, have I lost, and not improved through my own carelessness. Golden seasons of grace which I have enjoyed, but have let them slip, and been little bettered by them; sabbaths, sermons, sacraments that have come and gone, and left me as they found me. My fruit hath not been answerable to the soil I have been planted in. How often have I been ignorant under enlightening means; hard and cold under softening and warming ordinances; trifling and careless when I have been dealing with God about the concerns of my soul and eternity?

3. How often have I broken my covenants with God; my engagements, promises, and resolutions of new and better obedience; resolved against this and that sin, and yet fallen into it again; many a time returning to folly, after God hath spoken peace to me, and after I have spoken promises to God! Presently after a sacrament, how have I returned to former vanity, folly, sensuality, frothiness; to former pride, passion, and worldliness; so soon have I forgot the vows of God!

4. How unprofitable have I been in my converse with others; how few have been the better for me; how many the worse for me; how little good have I done; how little light have I cast in the sphere wherein God hath placed me; how little have I been concerned for the souls of others; and how little useful have I been to them. How vain and light have I been many times in my words and carriage, going down the stream of folly with others, when my seriousness might have stemmed the tide! How seldom hath my speech been with grace, and how often with corruption; *not* seasoned with salt!

5. In the general, how forgetful have I been of God and his word, and of myself and my duty, and of the great concernments of my soul and eternity, living too much as if I had no God to serve, and never a soul to save!

I might mention many particular miscarriages which I have been guilty of in heart and life, and which are known to God and my own heart; and yet, after all, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me, O God, from my secret sins; have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out all my transgressions, for the sake of the Lord my righteousness."

Q. III. *From what principles do I act in this undertaking?*

This is also a very material inquiry in every action, to ask whence it comes, especially in so great a turn of life as this.

1. I hope I can say that it is of faith; and I am concerned it should be so, for "whatever is not of faith is sin." It is good for every man that he be fully persuaded in his own mind. Now,

(1.) I am fully persuaded that Jesus Christ, as king of the church, hath appointed and established the office of the ministry, to continue in a constant succession to the end of time, for the edification of the church, and has promised to be with his ministers always, to the end of the world. So that the office of the ministry is no human invention, but a divine institution.

(2.) I am fully persuaded that no man ought to thrust himself upon the work of the ministry, without a clear call from God to it. Not that we are to expect such extraordinary calls as the apostles had, but the ordinary call, by the mediation of ministers, who, as such, are authorized by Christ to try the abilities of those who offer themselves to the ministry, and if they find them fit, then to set them apart to that work, in a solemn manner, by the imposition of hands, with fasting and prayer; and that the laying on of the hands of the presbytery is the most regular way of ordination, and most agreeable to scripture.

(3.) I bless God that I am pretty well satisfied with the clearness of my call to the work, though I cannot but be sensible of great weakness and insufficiency for these things; yet I find that what abilities God has been pleased to give me, and let him

have all the glory, do evidently look toward this work, so that if I be in any measure qualified for any service, it is for this. I find also my own inclination strongly bent towards it, and that it hath been so ever since I knew any thing, and especially I consider that I have been much excited and encouraged to it by divers, both ministers and others, able, skilful, and faithful, fit to judge, by whom my purposes have been much confirmed. All which goes a great way towards the clearing of my call; and the earnest invitation I have lately had to stated work in a particular place, doth much help to clear my call to the work in general.

2. I hope I can say I act herein from a principle of true zeal for the glory of God; that this great thing I do, as I should do every thing, to the glory of God, that my light may shine, that Christ's kingdom may be advanced, the power of godliness kept up, the word of life held forth; by all which God is glorified. The desire of my soul is, that "whether I live I may live to the Lord, or whether I die I may die to the Lord, and that living and dying I may be the Lord's."

3. I hope I can say, that I act herein from a principle of real love to precious souls, for the good of which I would gladly spend and be spent. Methinks I love the precious souls of men so well, that I would fain be an instrument of convincing the unconvinced, converting the unconverted, and building up saints in holiness and comfort. I hope I know so much of the worth of souls, that I should think it a greater happiness to gain one soul to the Lord Jesus Christ, than to gain mountains of silver and gold to myself.

Q. IV. *What are the ends that I aim at in this great undertaking?*

It is a common saying that the end specifies the action; and, therefore, it is of great consequence to fix that right, that the eye may be single, for otherwise it is an evil eye. A bye and base end will certainly spoil the acceptableness of the best actions that can be performed.

Now what is the mark I aim at in this great turn of my life? Let conscience be faithful herein, and let the searcher of hearts make me known to myself.

1. I think I can say with confidence, that I do not design to take up the ministry as a trade to live by, or to enrich myself by, out of the greediness of filthy lucre. No! I hope I aim at nothing but *souls;* and if I gain those, though I should lose all my worldly comforts by it, I shall reckon myself to have made a good bargain.

2. I think I can say with as much assurance, that my design is not to get myself a name amongst men, or to be talked of in the world, as one that makes somewhat of a figure. No; that is a poor business. If I have but a good name with God, I think I have enough, though among men I may be reviled, and have my name trampled upon as mire in the streets. I prefer the good word of my Master far before the good word of my fellow-servants.

3. I can appeal to God, that I have no design in the least to maintain a party, or to keep up any schismatical faction; my heart rises against the thoughts of it. I hate dividing principles and practices, and whatever others are, I am for peace and healing; and if my blood would be sufficient balsam, I would gladly part with the last drop of it for the closing up of the bleeding wounds of differences that are amongst true Christians. Peace is such a precious jewel, that I would give any thing for it but truth. Those who are hot and bitter in their contendings for or against little things, and zealous in keeping up names of division and maintaining parties, are of a spirit which I understand not. Let not my soul come into their secret.

My ends, then, are according to my principles, and I humbly appeal to God concerning the integrity of my heart in them:

(1.) That I deliberately place the glory of God as my highest and ultimate end, and if I can be but any ways instrumental to promote *that*, I shall gain my end and have my desire. I do not design to preach myself, but as a faithful friend of the bridegroom, to preach Christ Jesus my Lord, as the standard-bearer among ten thousands. And if I can but bring people better to know, and love, and honor Christ, I have what I design.

(2.) That in order to the glory of God, I do sincerely aim at the good of precious souls. God is glorified when souls are benefited, and gladly would I be instrumental in that blessed work. I would not be a barren tree in a vineyard, cumbering the ground; but, by God's help, I would do some good in the world, and I know no greater good I can be capable of than doing

good to souls. I desire to be an instrument in God's hand of softening hard hearts, quickening dead hearts, humbling proud hearts, comforting sorrowful hearts; and if I may be enabled to do *this*, I have what I would have. If God denies me this, and suffers me to labor in vain, though I should get hundreds a-year by my labor, it would be the constant grief and trouble of my soul; and if I do not gain souls, I shall enjoy all my other gains with very little satisfaction. Though even in that case it would be some comfort, that the reward is not according to the success, but according to the faithfulness. But I seriously profess it, if I could foresee that my ministry would be wholly unprofitable, and that I should be no instrument of good to souls, though in other respects I might get enough by it, I would rather beg my bread from door to door, than undertake this great work.

Q. V. *What do I want?*

And what special things am I now to desire of God, the God of all grace? When I know whither to go for supplies, I am concerned to inquire what my necessities are. The requests I have to put to God are such as these:—

i. That he would fix, and confirm, and establish my heart in my dedication of myself to the work of the ministry. My carnal heart is sometimes ready to suggest to me, that I had better take some other way of living that would be less toilsome and perilous, and more pleasant and gainful; and the devil joins issue with my heart, and sets before me the profits and preferments I might possibly have in another way, and the trouble and reproach I am like to meet with in this way. Now, O that my God would restrain the tempter, and satisfy me in my choice, and furnish me with suitable considerations with which to answer such suggestions; and in order thereunto, give me believing views of eternity; having deliberately devoted myself to the work of the Lord, keep it always in the imagination of the thoughts of my heart, and establish my way before him.

ii. That he would in a special manner be present with me in the ordinance of dedication, filling my heart with such an experimental sense of the excellency of Christ, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, as that I may have cause to remember it, by a good token, as long as I live; that he would manifest himself to me, mark me for himself, and leave some sign behind him in my soul, that may make it evident God was there of a truth; that he would give me a comfortable earnest of the success of my ministry, by a signal owning of me in my entrance upon it.

iii. That he would fit and qualify me for this great work to which he is calling me. When Saul was anointed king, "God gave *him* another heart, an heart fit for kingship." I would fain have another heart, a heart fit for ministerial work, filled with ministerial gifts and graces.

1. *Ministerial gifts.* Every good gift comes from above, and therefore I look upward for gifts of knowledge in the mysteries of religion; gifts of utterance to explain and apply myself to others, and to speak the word with boldness. I have also need of prudence and discretion to order the affairs of my ministry.

2. *Ministerial graces.* Faith, love to God and souls, zeal for God's glory and souls' good; patience to do, to suffer, and to wait; an inward sense of the weight of the things I speak of. Two graces I do more especially beg of God:

(1.) Sincerity. That I may be really as good as I seem to be; that inward impressions may always be answerable to outward expressions in all my ministrations; that my eye may be single, my heart upright, and my ends fixed; that I may not cast the least glance at any low, bye, base end.

(2.) Humility. That God would hide pride from me, and clothe me with humility, that I may see that I have nothing, except my sins, but what I have received; that I may never please myself with the praises of men, but hand up all the praise to God; that the least workings of pride and conceitedness may be checked in me.

iv. That God would open a door of opportunity to me, and make my way plain before me, that the call I have to my work may be clear and satisfying, and that God would bless and succeed my endeavors for the good of souls.

Q. VI. *What are my purposes and resolutions for the future?*

This is also a requisite inquiry, when I am to put on a new character, and one so honorable. What shall I do that I may "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith I am called?"

1. I purpose and resolve, by the grace of God, that I will have no more to do with the unfruitful works of darkness, seeing it will not only be my duty as a Christian, but my office as a minister, to reprove them rather. "Pride, passion, worldliness, wantonness, vanity, are things the man of God must flee," 1 Tim. vi. 11. What have I to do any more with idols? What have I to do any more with sin? By the grace of God it shall not have dominion over me. The ministerial character will add a great aggravation to every sin; and therefore, "O my soul! stand in awe and sin not."

2. I purpose and resolve that, by the grace of God, I will abound more than ever in all manner of gospel obedience; that I will strive to be more humble, serious, and watchful, and self-denying, and live more above the world, and the things of it; that I will pray with more life, and read the scriptures with more care, and not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; that I will abound in good discourse, as I have ability and opportunity, with prudence; endeavoring as much as I can, "to *adorn* the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things."

3. In particular, I resolve in the strength, spirit, and grace of Jesus Christ my Lord, to consider well and perform my ordination vows; to hold fast the form of sound words which I have heard and received, in "faith and love which is in Christ Jesus;" and never to let go any truth, whatever it cost me; ever owning the scripture as "the only rule of faith and practice."

That I will wholly give up myself to the work, and employ all my talents in the service of God and souls, with seriousness and sedulity: that I will not only preach, but to the utmost of my power defend, the truths of God against all opposers, and do all I can to convince or silence gainsayers.

That I will endeavor to maintain not only truth, but peace and unity in the church of God; that I will patiently bear, and thankfully accept of, the admonitions of my brethren, and esteem such smitings as an excellent oil that shall not break my head.

That if ever God shall call me to the charge of a family, I will walk before my house in a perfect way, with an upright heart, not doubting but that then God will come unto me; my house shall be a Bethel; wherever I have a tent God shall have an altar; and Joshua's resolution shall be mine, "Whatever others do, I and my house will serve the Lord."

That if ever God calls me to the charge of a flock, I resolve, by his grace, with all possible diligence to lay out myself for the spiritual good of those over whom God shall set me; and that in conversation I will endeavor to be an example to the flock, going before them in the way to heaven; and will improve all the interest I have, and all the authority I may have, for the honor of God, the good of souls, and the edifying the mystical body of Christ.

Whatever opposition I may meet with in my work, by the grace of God I will not be terrified with it, nor frightened by the winds and clouds from sowing and reaping; but in the strength of my God, go on in the midst of discouragements; and if God shall call me to sufferings, which I promise to expect and count upon, I will, by the grace of God, suffer cheerfully and courageously for the truths and ways of Christ; "choosing rather with Moses, to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season;" and I will esteem not only the crown of Christ, but the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, having respect to the recompense of reward.

This is the substance of what I promise in the strength of the Spirit in the grace of Christ; and having sworn by his strength, I will perform it, that I will keep his righteous judgments, and the Lord keep it always in the imagination of the thoughts of my heart, and establish my way before him.

RULES OF CONDUCT ADOPTED.

BY THE REV. E. PORTER, D. D., ANDOVER, U. S.

I. THE CARE OF MY HEART.

1. I will endeavor to keep the Sabbath holy. I will avoid conversation on worldly topics, and will not allow myself to think on any matter of common business, nor to read literary or professional books on this holy day.

2. Special hinderances excepted, I will endeavor to maintain secret devotion statedly, at least twice a day.

3. I will recollect every day that I am mortal.

4. When any doubtful thing is to be done, I will ask myself, "How will it bear the eye of God's omniscience? how will it appear at the judgment?"

5. I will endeavor to repress all undue regard to the praise or censure of men, by recollecting that God is a witness of all that I *do* or *think*.

6. I will guard against *selfishness* as the "abominable thing which the Lord hates." When I detect myself in being especially pleased with a good action, because it is done by *myself*, or done by another through *my* advice, I will condemn the littleness of such feelings as below the dignity of Christian principles. In all such cases, I will not speak of myself without some obvious reason; first, because it may cherish pride; and secondly, because it may exhibit the appearance of pride to others.

7. I will consider myself as sacredly accountable to God for my improvement of the *influence* attached to my station; and will endeavor to distinguish betwixt the respect which is given to my *office*, and that which would in other circumstances be given to *myself*.

II. Care of my tongue.

1. When I am angry I will never speak, till I have taken at least as much time for reflection as Athenodorus prescribed to Cæsar.*

2. I will never talk *to* an angry man.

3. I will not talk to a man intoxicated with strong drink.

4. I will receive admonition from my friends with candor and thankfulness; and will be careful not to make a peevish reply to any one who gives me advice, though it be officious or even impertinent.

5. That I may be kept from speaking amiss of my Christian brethren, I will *pray* for them.

6. With the exception of cases in which Christian prudence requires secrecy, I will consider it sinful to say any thing of others *privately*, which I would not say *openly*. In general I will deal in *secrets* as little as possible.

7. I will not mention the fault of another, when I have not good reason to hope that some valuable end will be answered by my doing so.

III. Self-examination.

I will regard the Bible as the only infallible test of character. With this in my hands, if I am deceived as to my spiritual state, it is my own fault.

I am satisfied that one great reason why so many real Christians live doubting, and die trembling, is the neglect of self-examination.

1. I will beware of relying upon official religion. I will never take it for granted that I am a Christian because others consider me so; nor because my profession or station requires that I should be a Christian.

2. In judging of myself, I will make due allowance for the restraints I have been under from early education—from dear Christian friends, and from regard to public opinion; and will never ascribe to Christian principles the absence of faults which I am under no temptation to commit.

3. In any doubtful case, where good and bad motives are mingled as excitements to action, I will not conclude that the good motives influence me, without the most serious scrutiny.

4. I will watch my heart under *affliction*. As the severest strokes that I have felt hitherto, have been my *greatest mercies*, I will not, like the perverse child that attempts to resist or escape correction, try to break away from the rod of my heavenly Father; but will give him my hand, and beg him to repeat his strokes, when he sees it necessary to purify my soul from sin.

IV. Studies.

1. I will read no book without the expectation of real benefit; and will consider that as *lost time* which is spent in reading without *attention* and *reflection*.

2. I will never covet the reputation of knowing *every thing*.

3. I will never speak confidently when I am in doubt, nor scruple to *say* that I *am ignorant*, when I am so.

4. Having suffered severely by late studies at night, I will never pursue any serious study after ten o'clock in the evening.

5. I will not read any book which I should be unwilling to have it *known* that I have read; or the reading of which I shall

* This prescription was, "Always repeat the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet before you give way to the impulse of anger." A prescription still more worthy than that of the heathen philosopher to be remembered is—"When in anger, repeat the Lord's prayer before you give utterance to your feelings."

probably recollect with regret on my dying bed.

6. Since my time for study is so much restricted by frail health and various engagements, I will consider it as a sacred duty to spend no time in the attitude of study, without direct and vigorous application of my mind to some important subject.

7. I will not hold myself at liberty to neglect duties that are plainly devolved upon me by the providence of God, even though these duties debar me from studies which I earnestly wish to pursue.

V. Preparation for death.

1. When I awake to the light of a new day, I will endeavor to ask myself each morning, "Could I know this to be my *last day* on earth, what duty that I have neglected ought to be performed?"

2. That I may not be surprised by death, I will endeavor to carry with me the habitual recollection, that it *may* come at any moment.

3. I will often reflect that this life is only preparatory to eternity; and that he who stationed me here, knows how and when to call me away.

4. As my comfort in death must depend on my hope of heaven, I will often examine this hope; because if I have good reason to believe that I shall live with Christ in glory, I shall have no reason for reluctance in leaving this world, any more than the sentinel in being called from his post after a stormy night, or the child who has been long from home, in returning to his father's house.

5. I am satisfied from much observation, that the *bodily pangs* of *dying* are much less terrible than is commonly supposed, except in a few extreme cases. I will not therefore be greatly disquieted with the anticipation of these pangs.

VI. Public deportment.

1. I will endeavor to remember that as a *minister* of the *gospel*, my office is more important than that of any earthly potentate.

2. In my intercourse with men, I will endeavor not to degrade this office by exhibiting a *love of money*, one of the vilest and most dangerous passions that can infest the heart of a minister.

3. I will watch against levity in conversation, a fault to which I am in danger of resorting as an antidote against the influence of feeble health. Yet,

4. I will not identify in feeling, or in my conduct tempt others to identify *religion* and *melancholy;* because if I were to paint a Pharisee, I should give him a *sad countenance;* but if an angel or my Saviour, a *cheerful* one. The fact that painters who are strangers to vital godliness, so generally, in representing Christ, give him the aspect of sadness, I will endeavor to make instructive to myself.

VII. Care of my health.

The difference between that state of health which amounts to bare *existence*, and that which admits of vigorous mental action, is so great, that there is no earthly blessing I so earnestly desire as health. But as I am clearly destined to be an invalid while I live, whatever I am to do for God and the church, is to be accomplished by systematic care of my frail body.

1. I will not eat or drink any kind or quantity of food, that I have good reason to believe will impair my health.

2. I will, when not sick, take exercise daily, equivalent to the labor of sawing and splitting wood two hours.

3. When in perspiration, I will not stand or sit in cold air, without increase of clothing. I will not stand or walk on wet ground, in a cold season, without guarding my feet; and I will shun exposure to the evening, in cold or damp weather.

XVIII.—THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE.

BY THE REV. T. H. SKINNER, D. D., OF NEW YORK

As the great end of the sacred office is to impress the contents of the Bible on the hearts of men, so, in subserviency to that end, the great business of those who exercise that office is to acquire, as perfectly as possible, the meaning and spirit of that divine book. All creeds, systems, theories, sciences, are to be tried by the Bible, and to be rejected as falsifying the divine veracity, if they cannot abide the trial. To a man who understands the literary character of the Bible, and remembers the fallibility of the human mind, and the influence of depravity in obscuring evidence and perverting reason, this is a motive of resistless power to the utmost diligence, candor, and seriousness, in searching out the real doctrine of the sacred text. Who that does not forget how soon he is to an

swer for himself at the bar of heaven, would choose to take part in that business, of which not a little has been done, wherein the Bible is made to condemn what it in fact approves, and to approve what it condemns, and to speak with authority where it has maintained a perfect silence? He who demands for his own utterances the reverence which is due only to the oracles of God, should first be sure, that those utterances and the divine oracles have precisely the same sense; otherwise he is a worm of the dust arrogating the place of the supreme Intelligence and the supreme Majesty of the universe.

But a preacher who would fully develop the power of his function, must aim to declare, in his official ministrations, not only truth, but the entire truth of God—the entire sense of the Bible, on all the subjects of which it treats. Nor should he content himself with a bare statement of the propositions which the Bible contains on the various topics of theology. He should study that book to make himself acquainted with its treasures of language, its eloquence, its poetry, its depths of learning. All books, in comparison, are poor of thought, of feeling, of expression, of whatever gives power and excellence to discourse. The subjects of sermons, the materials which enter into their structure, their arguments and illustrations, their spirit and manner, their grace, beauty, and strength of style, should be derived as much as possible from this celestial source. In short, no book, no study, except as it may assist him in better understanding and explaining the scriptures, is of much advantage to a minister of the gospel.

The study of the Bible, therefore, is, comprehensively, the only study of preachers. So it is forcibly declared to be by St. Paul, 1 Tim. iv. 15. It is a study deep and ample enough to exhaust a thousand of the ordinary terms of human life. It is not fit that I should here speak of the manner in which this study should be conducted: I will only say, in the words of one of the first of the Christian fathers, *tenentem sacros codices somnus abrepat, et cadentem faciem pagina sancta suscipiat.* Spare not a moment from the study of the Bible, which sleep does not demand for the resuscitation of your exhausted powers.

II. It should be one of the leading objects of a preacher's life to enlarge, as much as possible, his acquaintance with divine truth, in its systematic relations and affinities. Though a complete system of doctrines is nowhere presented, in scripture, in one digested view; yet the truths of inspiration do pertain to a system, and, like truths in the natural world, admit of classification. That any one has ever made, or will ever make a perfect arrangement of these truths, I do not affirm, and do not believe. They are parts of a system vast as the universe, and extending from eternity to eternity; and they are so sundered, interspersed, and intervolved into one another, as they lie everywhere in scripture, that it is doubtless beyond the power of man to set them together exactly in their proper places, and in perfectly systematic order. Nor can the damage be estimated, which these truths have suffered in statement and exhibition, by attempts at systematizing them, not conducted with a just sense of the sacredness and difficulty of that work. Still, the relations which the truths of revelation sustain towards each other, as component parts of a system, are to some extent clearly perceptible by us; and the process of classifying them must no more be abandoned, than an endeavor to acquire the true knowledge of them. They are truly understood, no further than they are seen in their systematic affinities and bearings. In divinity, as well as in law and physics, to obtain true knowledge is not to obtain bare historical information, but correct and enlarged views of the connection of things with one another, and their mutual, various, and interminable relations and tendencies.

It is incumbent on preachers, as their great business with mankind, to explain, defend, and enforce revealed truth; but *power* to do this depends essentially on a systematic knowledge of that truth, or a knowledge of it as inter-connected and mutually related in its various departments and ramifications. It is most manifest, that no one can set forth any part of truth symmetrically, precisely defined, and in fitting color and costume, any further than he has understood and digested it in its systematic relations to other truths. He who pretends to go further with his explanations or descriptions than he has gone in systematic understanding, advances in the dark, and knows not whereof he affirms, and whither his random assertions tend. Either we should not attempt to impart

solid instruction from the pulpit, or we should constantly study to make ourselves thoroughly systematic theologians.

Let me not be misunderstood in what I have said of the knowledge in question. It is not knowledge to be obtained by conning over, however sedulously, a formula of faith, or a body of divinity—another man's line of things made ready to our hand. It is one thing to know, that such and such are the definitions and statements comprised in a certain system; and another thing to understand clearly the congruities, and bearings, and connections: that is, in other words, the true meaning of those statements. The first is bare historical knowledge, which a child may acquire; the last is the result of independent and patient thought, and of thorough investigation of the principles and tendencies of things. This is what is needed. It is not to know what others have done in the business of systematizing divine truth, that will qualify preachers for successfully defending and inculcating it; but to be able in some measure to systematize it for themselves.

It is to be lamented that philosophical speculations are too much intermingled in our systems of divinity. But theology and philosophy have never been dissociated, and never will be, unless theology ceases to be a science. In all ages there have been different theological systems, and different systems of philosophy also. And the difference in the latter, has produced, and, I might almost say, constituted almost the whole of the difference in the former. Philosophy confessedly has not yet arrived at perfection; and he would speak unadvisedly who should affirm that there was no intermixture of error in the best system of theology extant. In the business then of tracing out the systematic order and connections of revealed truth, if ministers of the gospel would secure themselves against mistake, they must, along with profound respect for what has been done in this work by other human minds, cherish in themselves a spirit of independence of man. Let them remember who it is that hath said to them, "Call no man father upon earth; for one is your Father who is in heaven." It is only by following this counsel that they can avoid the danger and the responsibility of teaching for doctrines the commandments or opinions of men. But their distrust in man should include self-distrust, since they are men also. While pursuing the highest kind of knowledge, the true policy, the indispensable condition of success, is to keep the eye single, the mind humble and ready to surrender its own preconceptions, and embrace the truth wherever it may be found, or from whatever source it may proceed. It is the truest wisdom to do this; it is in their youth that men of vigorous and untrammeled minds have most confidence in their own speculations. Increased knowledge of the true system of the gospel, the result only of long-continued application, extended through the various departments of the field of divine doctrine, and many times renewed, lowers one's estimate of his own attainments, and makes him more a learner at the end than he was at the beginning of his course. There was not the least affectation of modesty in the remark of the great Newton to his friends, on their expressing admiration at his sublime discoveries, "To myself I seem to have been as a child playing on the sea-shore, while the immense ocean of truth lay unexplored before me."

XIX.—ON THE STUDY OF THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE REV. JOHN HANNAH, D. D.

But is it necessary, or even profitable that, fully persuaded as you already are concerning the truth of Christianity, you should occupy your time in the examination of its evidences? I think it is. Such an examination will serve, by the blessing of God, to supply your own mind with a large accession of light on the subject which is most dear to your best affections, and will thus establish and guard your confidence in "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." It will also prepare you, in this age of fearless skepticism and innovation, to detect and expose the manifold artifices which the oppugners of Christianity may contrive; to seize the Proteus of infidelity in all its tortuous shiftings and transformations, and fix it in its proper shape, while you approve yourself "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and reverence," showing, by arguments the most convincing and unanswerable, that you

have not followed "cunningly devised fables;" finally, it will guide you to a more intimate and exact acquaintance with the contents of that revelation which you thus learn to substantiate by appropriate and satisfactory proof. Rightly to study the evidences of Christianity, is, in an eminent degree, to study Christianity itself, and to gain a view, at once more distinct and more comprehensive, of its rich and saving discoveries.

Let it never be forgotten, however, that this study is of a strictly subordinate and introductory character. You are not to rest in it as an end, but to use it, and to teach others also to use it, as a means. Do we receive Christianity as a revelation truly divine? Can we lay our hand upon the sacred volume, and with triumphant assurance say, "This is the book of God?" And are we filled with a secret satisfaction and joy, when we find that all the assaults of its enemies serve only to prove its impregnable stability and strength? Why do we not, then, faithfully apply it to its own spiritual and practical purposes? It is delightful to "walk about Zion," and "tell the towers thereof," to "mark well her bulwarks," and "consider her palaces;" but how much more delightful is it to enter the venerable precincts, to pass through the interposing veil, to approach "the mercy-seat and cherubim," in the sanctuary of interior and holy worship, and with the full confidence of faith and hope to cry, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth."

XX.—ON THE VALUE OF TIME.

BY THE REV. JESSE APPLETON, D. D., LATE PRESIDENT OF BOWDOIN COLLEGE, UNITED STATES.

Of the various ways in which time is frequently wasted by young gentlemen who are professedly engaged in literary pursuits, I notice,

1. Your time will be partially lost, if your reading is not conducted agreeably to some plan or method. The accomplishment of any thing valuable, must be preceded by design. To effect any thing to good purpose, it is necessary to know previously what we mean to effect. The object aimed at must be well defined; and the path leading to it must be distinctly marked. The importance of what is here recommended will be rendered obvious by the following illustration. At rising in the morning one person submits it to chance, in what manner the day shall be spent. He reads the book that is casually thrown in his way, and continues the reading no longer than he is prompted by present inclination. Should another be presented, it is assumed with equal readiness, and abandoned with the same caprice. Another person has the subject of investigation before him, and the book by which he is determined to aid his inquiries. At the close of the day there will be an important difference in the value of their respective acquirements. In the latter case, the mind is fixed upon its object; in the former, it has no object. The one pursues the path previously marked out for himself; the other had no path to pursue. That which is true of a day, may be true of a year, or of a longer period.

2. Much time is lost in reading with divided attention. The power of fixing the attention, i. e. of commanding the thoughts, has the most important connection with mental improvement. Your acquisitions will be very nearly proportionate to the degree in which this power is possessed; and this power, let it be observed, is not born with us, but is the creature of habit. So far obtain the command of your minds, as easily to exclude all thoughts foreign to the subject which you wish to investigate, and your success in the investigation will exceed your hopes. But if while a book, however well chosen, engrosses the eye, the attention is shared by another object, or divided among many, little will be acquired; and what is still worse, the mind becomes unmanageable, and habits of inattention will be confirmed. Nor ought I to omit this opportunity of suggesting, that as memory depends much on attention, you will by this careless manner of reading form a bad memory, or impair a good one. I speak of forming a memory, in a full belief that this is as truly within our own power as to form an intellectual or moral character. You

have all been sensible, I presume, on some occasions, of the difficulty of confining your attention to a particular subject, and you have known, too, the unhappy effects in which this difficulty has resulted. We sometimes imagine that we have made great efforts in studying a subject, when in reality the subject has scarcely been studied at all. The effort has been chiefly expended in unsuccessful endeavors to fix the mind. The general of an army could hardly be so far mistaken, as to suppose that he had been engaged in hard fighting, when he had been principally occupied in urging his troops, or in bringing back fugitives into the line. Whatever you read or study, let your mind be wholly engrossed by the subject.

3. A state of mind nearly allied to that which has just been noticed, is indecision. You must not only ascertain what ought to be done, but must determine to do it. There is doubtless a time for deliberating, and on the right use of this it depends whether a man's life shall be distinguished for temerity or good judgment. But the whole of life is not to be devoted to inquiry or indecision. Deliberation becomes important, chiefly because it relates to action. The purpose of inquiry is to ascertain the fitness of an object, and the most direct and honorable way to attain it. Let doubt and deliberation end whenever it becomes fully apparent what ought to be done. No great effort of bodily strength is to be expected, when the sinews and fibres are relaxed. In this particular there is a striking coincidence between the body and the mind. There must be a tone, a kind of elasticity produced in the intellectual powers; otherwise the greatest advantage will not be obtained from your time and means of instruction. Nothing of very high value can be acquired without determination. It is among the most permanent advantages of a collegiate education, that the general course of study is defined and established. In this respect there can be no uncertainty what ought to be done; the object is distinctly exhibited; nothing is wanting but determination and perseverance. But while these are wanting, time will be partially lost, and the progress of mental cultivation will be slow and disheartening.

4. Another way of losing time is by spending it in idle conversation and low pursuits. I need not inform you how criminal this is, when contemplated in a moral view. You know on whose authority it rests that "by our words we shall be justified or condemned." I have at present peculiar reference to your intellectual characters and progress. Conversation relating to your stated exercises, or on subjects of science or literature in general, is doubtless a very correct and advantageous way of spending your time. It well becomes young men of academical character, to cultivate literary intercourse. Your exercises will hereby become the more familiar, and the subjects to which they relate be more deeply impressed on the mind. In addition to this, you will acquire a command of language, and ability to take part in literary discussions. On the contrary, by idle, impure, or profane conversation, and low pursuits, your intellectual natures will be degraded—you will contract aversion to manly and laudable employments—you will lose all relish for good society, and be prepared, on leaving college, to form such associations as will lead you either to forget, or to pervert to the worst purposes, whatever of knowledge may be here obtained. To secure that attention which is so necessary to the student's success, the codes of all literary institutions have provided that certain hours shall be punctually devoted to study. Were this provision not accompanied with any allowance of time for relaxation, it would be evidently unreasonable. But where ample provision of this kind is made, all infringement on the law—all neglect of study hours must be without excuse. A hab' of leaving your rooms, or of freely admitting others into them, in hours of study, is with obvious propriety noticed and condemned by the laws of this seminary. The former indeed is a twofold offence; first, against order, for the maintenance of which the law has made a wise provision; and secondly, against politeness, as a person thus guilty throws himself on those who are desirous of making a better use of their time, and may not possess the resolution which indeed they ought to have, of saying to him plainly that his visits are unwelcome. Amusements are justifiable so far only as they contribute to health, or prepare the mind for more vigorous and effectual application. By bodily exercise both these objects are accomplished at the same time. Whatever kind of diversion either partakes

of dissipation or leads to it, should be the object of unqualified reprobation. All kinds of irregularity or excess, instead of contributing to health, impair it. The injurious effects are frequently so great as to be immediately perceptible; but if long delayed, they are still real and certain. No person can violate with final impunity the order of nature, or laws of sobriety. Nor is the mind by every species of dissipation less injuriously affected than the body; and it is perversion of language to speak of recreating the mind by that which deadens perception, disorders the judgment, and stupifies the powers of investigation. Even in those bodily exercises, which, if used with moderation, are innocent and salutary, there may be danger of excess. Never let it escape you, that there is a broad line of distinction between amusement and the duties of life. He who converts amusements into an employment, places his mind upon them, or uses them for their own sake, is guilty of an error not less absurd than that of the miser who, because wealth is known to procure the necessaries and luxuries of life, attributes to it an absolute inherent value, and makes it an object of passionate idolatry.

XXI.—THE REGULATION OF THE THOUGHTS.

BY REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D.

THERE is a distinction between the *voluntary* and the *involuntary*, between the *virtuous* and the *vicious* emotions with which the heart may be filled; a distinction which, we think, is not sufficiently adverted to. By adverting to it, we should by examination be led to discover what degree of virtue there may be in the sensibilities, which have something organic in them. Nothing can be *vicious* which is not *voluntary;* and, therefore, in estimating criminality, it is necessary to consider how far the will is concerned. When we speak of the *pathology* of the mind, we mean that the mind is *passive*. In every emotion, we must trace what share the *will* had in it: and we shall thus learn how far it was *virtuous* or *vicious*. If the eye be directed to an object, we cannot help seeing it; but we may shut our eyes or turn them away. It is in a similar way that man is shown to be responsible for his belief. There is an organic necessity for believing according to the evidence presented; but then the will has an intromission with all the steps leading to the *presentation* of that evidence. It does not matter whether the object be presented to the eye or to the mind. The latter has *attention*, the *looking* faculty of the mind, which may be recalled at pleasure. If any object be present to the mind, the emotion of the heart is a pathological consequence: but the *will* is responsible for the *presence* of the object. The culture of the heart is not in the *imports*, but in the *exports;* directing the mind to right objects externally, by the contemplation of which right emotions are produced. Thus the sanctifying effects of faith are experienced by keeping the thoughts fixed on the articles of religion. The chapter in Paley, in which this subject is adverted to, is pregnant with interest.

Two emotions, of a very different character, may be excited by the same object or event. Thus, either mirth or sorrow may be excited by witnessing the same accident. We are not now to inquire what comes between the accident and our feelings to produce these different results; but, perhaps, there is some incongruity in the circumstances, which incongruity causes laughter. We might instance an obvious specimen of the ludicrous—an acquaintance in the act of falling. There is no doubt an incongruity between the moment of his walking uprightly, with the full anticipation of getting forward, in that attitude, to the object whither he is bending; and the next moment of his floundering in the mud, and hastening with all his might to gather himself up again. And our mirth will be increased if he was walking with somewhat of a professional step, and if it happened in the muddiest part of the road, and if he was in the act of making an obeisance to the passing ladies before a host of spectators, and was thus led to make a reverence much more profound than he had calculated upon. But let the awkwardness of the fall remain, and let there be added a fracture, or a stream of blood, or a fit, or symptoms of much pain, and then another set of emotions will be excited, and will overbear the former. A mathematician might require the exact point where the one neutralized the other; but all are sensible that the two emotions might be so balanced as

to produce an ambiguity between the pity we were led to feel, and the levity we could not suppress. Accordingly, as the mind looks, the heart is affected. The heart follows the mind, in this process, with a fidelity which is very constant.

But observe how differently the same object affects different individuals. If we look at two or more, we shall find that the point to which we have referred varies in different persons. With some, it would require a great amount of suffering to stop their merriment, while, with others, the slightest pain would be sufficient. A gradation is observable from those who, by the slightest reflection on the pain that may have been incurred, would instantly change the mood of their spirits, to those who could still look sportively on, and send forth an ecstasy of inhuman delight, in the face of agony the most palpable and excruciating. You may remember the difference observable, in this respect, among children of the same family; some of them practising a certain mischievous roguery on the domestic animals, involving in it some degree at least of suffering, while in others there was the revolt of pained and offended sensibility. With the boys, it was a sense of the ludicrous that chiefly predominated, while the girls, with the characteristic tenderness of their sex, were most alive to sympathy; and, accordingly, upon these occasions the former were generally brought in as the defaulters, and the latter appeared as the informers, or the plaintiffs, moved alike with pity on account of suffering, and with indignation against the wanton infliction of it. We may also have seen how, in one set of spectators, the ludicrous propensity excited by the fall has been checked and superseded by the other emotion, on discovering that some hurt had been sustained; while, in another set, the very limp, or contortion, or vociferous outcry, that gave evidence of the pain, would only minister food to the ludicrous propensity, and cause them to break forth into a still louder ecstasy than before. It is even conceivable that some dreadful result may have happened, and that weeping relatives may have congregated around; and yet even this may not be tragical enough to affect a few stout and confirmed associates in blackguardism, who might stand their ground against a representation that softened all but themselves, and even lift up a shout of brutal exultation, though they had to make an instantaneous escape from the indignation of a crowd who thought more correctly, and felt more tenderly than they. It is painful to follow out these exhibitions of our species to cases of still more monstrous and unequivocal atrocity, when a savage enjoyment seems to be felt in the very spectacle of human agony, and when the writhings of a sentient creature in torment can be looked upon, not with *coldness* only, but with positive *complacency*. Such is the case with the cruelties of an Indian torture, which are not only *witnessed* but *inflicted* with barbarian transport on the unhappy victim; and such was the case also in those religious martyrdoms, when the tyrants of *ancient* or the inquisitors of *modern* Rome could, from some proud and purple eminence, feast their eyes on the last quiverings of agonized nature.

All this diversity, we think, is not owing to different pathological laws. Present a cruel man with nothing but suffering, and it will excite compassion. But he sees a different object from that which the humane man sees; and his depravity consists in so directing his mind to that object, as to allow the other to be banished. These observations apply to the experiments of scientific men on living animals. There is not a different pathological law; but they proceed, in spite of the pain inflicted, because the mind is taken up by another object. You cannot repeal the pathological law; but you can shun the improper object. Hence we learn the mighty importance of objective Christianity. The whole of Christian feeling depends on it. We also learn the ascendant rank of faith in sanctification; for it is only by the constant memory of the things we believe, that sanctification is promoted. We thus "build ourselves up in our most holy faith." There is a remarkable influence exercised by an object over the character and conduct; and the way in which a man looks has great power over his mind. This is often adverted to in scripture, which speaks of the power resulting merely from the truths being revealed. Faith is sometimes traduced, as if it dispensed with virtue, whereas it is an instrument of moral renovation.

Proceed on this principle in cultivating the heart. You cannot thwart the pathology of the mind, or disunite feeling from observation. You cannot do any thing

against the laws of the mental constitution, though men in general think they can. You cannot separate the consequent from the antecedent. Give your efforts at the place where the will may really be effective, and not at the place where it has no power. Shun wrong objects, and turn to right ones. This accords with the admonitions of scripture—not to *meet*, but to *shun* temptation.

XXII.—TRAITS OF CHARACTER, MENTAL AND MORAL.

A LETTER TO STUDENTS, BY DR. COGSWELL.

Dear Brethren,—In this letter I shall consider some of the most distinguishing traits of character, mental and moral, which it is desirable that you should possess and cultivate. My object will be to delineate, not all the characteristics which are important, but the most prominent, that your attention may be suitably directed to their acquisition in the highest degree to which you can attain. As habit exerts a mighty ascendency over us, and is therefore often denominated "second nature;" so it is very desirable that those mental and moral qualities which conduce to your happiness and usefulness, should early be possessed, that they may become settled and extended. Of these I would name,

1. Decision. This is coming to a firm conclusion in reference to any matter, and remaining in it. Commendable decision implies two things,—knowledge of what is truth and duty, and a fixed determination to conform to them in practice, without compromise. A person who has not a full view of that about which he is to form an opinion, or to act, will ever be undecided, because, as his knowledge changes, so will his opinions and conduct change. He will be tossed to and fro, and be "carried about by every wind of doctrine." He will have no settled opinion, but he will be in constant fluctuation. The same may be said of the individual who has no fixed determination; such a one will be wavering and indecisive. In the natural structure of their minds, some persons are decided and inflexible; others are the reverse. Decision, when considered in relation to any proposition to be maintained, any duty to be performed or practice to be observed, is of greater or less consequence, according to the nature and importance of the subject to which it relates. In regard to matters of religious faith and practice, it is of the highest moment that our decision be right, or the very fact that we are decided, may prove injurious either to ourselves or others. In forming your decisions then, be not hasty, but deliberate and judicious, especially on subjects of a religious nature. You will always exercise the most stable confidence in God, for "they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever."

II. Resolution. This trait of character means fixedness and fearlessness in purpose and action—a zealous determination to perform some act or to accomplish some object. It is the opposite of that feeling and conduct described by Dr. Young, when he speaks of man, who, prone to procrastinate his reformation,

"Resolves and re-resolves, then dies the same."

A man strongly marked with this trait of character, will overcome difficulties seemingly insurmountable. Before him the Alps and Pyrenees become plains,—oceans, seas,—and seas fordable pools. It may be adopted as a maxim, true in the general,—a person may be what he resolves to be, or do what he resolves to do, provided he attempts to accomplish his resolution with resolution. This quality of mind ever has been, and still is, essential to success in any difficult undertaking. Without it, those objects of interest and magnitude, in the arts and sciences, which delight and astonish the world, would not have existed. The various volumes of instruction which contain the labors of the learned, the wise, and the good, would not have been produced for the benefit of mankind. Without this, too, the various efforts which have been made, and which are still making, to promote the temporal and eternal welfare of the human family, will not be carried forward to complete success. Endeavor, then, to possess this valuable qualification, and suffer not feeble and irresolute exertions to prevent the performance of any duty.

III. Courage. A proper definition of courage, is bravery, intrepidity. It is the opposite of pusillanimity, or timidity. A man of this spirit never says, "There is a lion without—I shall be slain in the streets." Possessed of religious heroism, he is ready

to strive with the world, the flesh, and the devil. He who would conquer, must manfully contend; and he is the greatest hero who conquers himself. This trait of character, both in a natural and moral sense, should be diligently sought and cultivated. It is in no way so well obtained as by the promotion of piety in ourselves. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion." Courage, though not so frequently called into requisition as some other qualities of the mind, is nevertheless of essential service. Occasions may occur when a destitution of this will be attended with serious disadvantages, especially so, when in relation to things of a religious nature, the want of it would prevent one from advancing in the path of duty. He who suffers a fearful or timid spirit to deter him in the work of the Lord, will be instrumental of greatly injuring his cause, and of giving an opportunity to the enemy of souls to triumph. Such a one is unworthy to be an ambassador of Jesus Christ.

IV. Independence. This means exemption from reliance on any one, or control by any one. When properly cherished and exercised it partakes of magnanimity in thought, feeling, and action. A pride of singularity in this, or an ostentatious display of it, is not commendable. Would you possess true independence of character, think and act for yourselves—never reject or adopt opinions or practices, merely because others have rejected or adopted them. It has been said, "No man was ever great by imitation." Therefore, take no opinion, pursue no course of conduct, on trust; be biased neither by passion nor prejudice in faith or practice, but believe and act on substantial evidence and sound principles, and in such a course be inflexible. Ever be willing, however, to hear suggestions from those who are entitled to deference and esteem, and who do not coincide with you in views and feelings. But never sacrifice your own opinions and practices in accommodation to theirs, without full conviction that they are right.

V. Perseverance. By this is meant continued steadfastness, or persistance in purpose and pursuit. It is the opposite of fickleness or inconstancy in endeavor, and yet it is not bigotry, nor obstinacy. A person possessed of this trait of character is generally successful in what he attempts. True is the motto, *Perseverando vinces*. Without perseverance, the most desirable object to be obtained may fail, even after much exertion has been used to effect it. They who would win the prize must run, and never cease running until the race is over. In every pursuit, then, to which duty calls, notwithstanding the obstacles which may arise to hinder your progress, persevere, even to its full accomplishment. You are now not aware what you will be able to perform. Try—remembering that whatever has been done, may be done again; keep on trying, and success is almost certain.

VI. Judgment. As judgment is that act of the mind by which we form opinions in regard to right and wrong, truth and falsehood, persons and things,—whatever may aid in rendering its decisions correct should be diligently attended to. This is a quality of mind, which, like others, may be improved by cultivation. A person whose judgment is inclined to err, though his motives be good, is constantly in danger of coming to wrong conclusions, by which evils may ensue. While one whose judgment is correct, readily and clearly perceives what is right, and is prepared without delay to follow its dictates. Cultivate to the highest possible degree, your faculty of judging respecting persons, things, and actions. Though it is not the privilege of every one to possess this trait of character in equal perfection, yet, by careful and diligent attention, it may be greatly improved.

VII. Common sense. A good definition of this is given by Mr. Hall, author of the "Lectures on School-keeping." He says, "I mean by the term, the faculty by which things are seen as they are. It implies judgment and discrimination, and a proper sense of propriety in regard to the common affairs of life. It leads us to form judicious plans of action; and to be governed by our circumstances, in such a way as men in general will approve. It is the exercise of reason, uninfluenced by passion or prejudice." This trait of character is the opposite of one which appeared in a Methodist minister, according to an account I heard given of him at an annual conference of that denomination, when, in conformity with their standing rule, the ministers are appointed for the year. It was said of him, that he did not properly time things; that he fre-

quently chose wrong texts for discussion, and then wrongly illustrated them; that he never hit the nail on the head; that he preached *at* rather than *to* the people, and prayed *at* rather than *for* the people. Because he was thus destitute of common sense, the conference, which seemed to possess much of this excellent quality, withheld the renewal of his appointment. In this characteristic of the human mind, there is a combination of the following attributes —perception, judgment, and executive power, accompanied with a benevolent disposition. This desirable trait of character was possessed in a high degree of perfection by the late Rev. Dr. Samuel Worcester, Jeremiah Evarts, Esq., and the Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Porter.

VIII. SELF-CONTROL. Self-control is another characteristic, the possession or destitution of which, affects not only the happiness and usefulness of the individual who is the subject of it, but is often connected with the welfare and happiness of others. One who, without consideration, speaks or acts from the impulse of feeling, has often, in the hour of reflection, occasion to regret an unguarded word or action; while one who is accustomed to self-control, will easily check the first risings of an inconsiderate and insubordinate spirit. The proper government of one's self, in regard to passions and conduct, is therefore very desirable, though contrary to our natural inclinations and difficult to acquire. It should ever be aimed at as a Christian duty, and as highly beneficial in its results, as it respects its subjects, and others. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city."

XXIII.—THE EFFECT OF ARDENT PIETY ON THE POWERS OF THE MIND.

BY THE REV. F. WAYLAND, D. D., PRESIDENT OF BROWN UNIVERSITY, U S.

LET us then consider the effect of ardent piety upon the original faculties of the mind.

It concentrates their exertions. The ray which falls upon this world from the Sun of righteousness, is constant and invariable. Where once its light and shade have fallen, there they remain, unchangeable forever. He who looks upon the world through this medium, cannot be deluded by the fantastic and unsubstantial looming of sublunary glory. He sees his object clearly, and he marks with intuitive accuracy the line which is drawn around every thing irrelative to it. With his end thus clearly in view, he is not led astray by those bewildering pursuits in which the exertions of other men are so lamentably frittered away. Every thing presents itself to him in its true color and its real dimensions, and day after day it appears invariably the same. Whilst the decisions of a less religious man are balancing between this world and the next, between present ease and future glory, he has already decided, for he has asked how will it appear at the judgment-seat of Christ? Hence, every power being moved by one principle, and directed to one object, he stands a pre-eminent exemplification of simplicity of purpose.

In the next place, ardent piety excites *the original powers of the mind to vigorous and continued action.* To a thoughtful mind there is scarcely a more melancholy picture of man, than that which is presented by the comparison of what he is with what he might have been. It is humiliating to think, even for a moment, upon the endowments of a human soul, and then to think of what, among the myriads of our race, is the amount of individual accomplishment. When we have said that a unit has been added, and a unit has been taken away from the sum of human existence, it would seem as though we had told all that, to human eye, was important in the life of millions of our race. And if we ascend to the walks of educated, or even of professional life, how deplorable is the spectacle! We see, in the majority of instances, scarcely the endeavor after distinguished excellence, or at best, the casual half-framed resolution, successful, after long periods of inactivity, if successful at all, rather by accident than by power; but more frequently sinking to the grave in pitiable, and yet patient oblivion. And those who succeed well, devote but a small portion of their time to intellectual labor. The productions of genius are, perhaps, more frequently than otherwise, the results of mighty, but transient effort, following, and again to be succeeded by, long intervals of inaction. Whilst we rejoice at what is done, we sigh to reflect how much that was possible, is left undone. Oh, had that intellect wrought thus powerfully, withou

ceasing, how stupendous would have been the result of its ultimate effort, how gloriously would it have dispelled the darkness of ignorance, and how widely would it have poured the light of truth upon the intellect of man! Now, against this malady of our race, the pressure of this vis inertiæ of our fallen nature, ardent piety is surely the best preservative. It teaches a man the full weight of those *obligations* which bind him to the God who made him, and to the Saviour who redeemed him. It teaches him that every intellectual power is a most precious talent, and every moment of time an invaluable treasure, and that God hath required him to improve them to the uttermost. He cannot be idle, nay, he cannot be frivolous, without being sinful, and he cannot be sinful without grieving the God whom he loves. Every principle which animates his bosom teaches him to put forth every energy in the cause of Christ, that so he may finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he has received of the Lord Jesus.

And besides this, the *motives* which influence him are such as call forth his powers to the uttermost. His own soul is at stake. The slothful servant was cast out, not because he had wasted his lord's money, but because he had not improved it. The souls of other men are at stake. Eternal interests, the destinies of his people, tremendous thought! are connected—most intimately connected, with his exertions. He would secure for himself, and for them, salvation from a doom, in comparison with which, all that can be conceived of sublunary infelicity dwindles to a point; and the bliss which he would attain is such, that every thing earthly sustains to it only the relation of finite to infinity. The frown of God awes him. The favor of God animates him. The love of Christ constrains him. He looks abroad over the wide field of seen and unseen being, and every thing urges him to strenuous, to agonizing labor. From time and from eternity, from things present, and from things to come, from death and from judgment, from heaven and from hell, a voice addresses him, saying, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no knowledge, nor work, nor device, in the grave."

And yet again, the *subjects* on which a man of deep devotion loves best to meditate, are pre-eminently adapted to impart vigor and expansiveness to every power of the soul. Such a man has to do, not with things which are seen, which are temporal, but with things that are not seen, which are eternal. He expatiates not over this little limited sphere of tangible materialism, but over that glorious region of uncreated purity, which revelation discloses to the eye of faith. The perfections of God; the illustrations of his ever acting power; the transcendent combinations of his unfathomable wisdom; the awful exhibitions of his spotless holiness; the affecting displays of his inconceivable love; the mysteries of providence and of redemption, and all the various aspects in which these are presented, by aught that has been seen in the visible, or revealed in the invisible world; these are the subjects of his reverential meditation. Tell me now, whether there be any other men, whose contemplations are so adapted to mental elevation, as those of the humble believer in Jesus. I pass by the worshippers of pleasure and of gain. I entreat you, compare the daily intellectual occupations of an habitually devout man, with even the investigations of the philosopher, the researches of the historian, or the calculations of the politician, and tell me which is most worthy the capacities of man. It was by habitually meditating upon the subjects which I have mentioned, that prophets and apostles, though unlearned and illiterate men, poured over the oracles which they delivered the resplendent lustre of an unearthly eloquence. And thus the English Homer, drinking deeply from the sacred fountains, and filling his soul with the conceptions of revelation, bore away the palm of genius from classic antiquity, and stands, confessed, the sublimest of uninspired men. If, then, we desire to cultivate the faculties with which God has endowed us; if we would gird ourselves for vigorous and successful exertion, while we bless the Father of our spirits, who hath thus connected together our intellectual and moral improvement, let us give ourselves to the diligent study of the sacred scriptures, and to high and intimate communion with the uncreated Holy One. But this intellect in a minister of Christ, is to be applied to a particular purpose—the investigation of divine truth. His business is to teach men the will of God. That will is revealed in the holy oracles; and it is to be known by diligently applying to the study of them

whatever of intellectual or moral power the man may possess.

XXIV.—EXEMPLARY DILIGENCE.

BY THE REV. J. A. JAMES.

You are, of course, to be diligent in all the *public duties* of your office. You are always to look like a man that has much to do, and whose heart is set on doing it. You must always act with the diligence of one who feels the mighty impulse of immortal souls giving speed to his feet, and contrivance to his thoughts. Indolence never appears in the full display of its ugly form, nor in the exact dimensions of its guilt, till it is seen in the garb of the clerical character. Apply all the energies of your soul to the duties of your office. Catechize the young; visit the sick; search out the persons whom your sermons have impressed, and deepen the impression by private conversation; encourage the embarrassed to bring to you their perplexities; guide the young inquirer; hasten to console the aged pilgrim; go anywhere, and at any time, to do good; in short, "watch for souls as one that must give account."

Be diligent in the *private duties of your study*. I enjoin this upon you with peculiar earnestness. You cannot preach so as to edify your people, and secure their esteem, except you devote much time to private intellectual toil. Whatever you may be in the social circle, you never can long secure their respect without appearing respectable as a preacher. If you fail in this place that I now occupy, not the sweetness, no, nor the piety of an angel would keep you from sinking in their opinion. Congregations in the metropolis, where the private intercourse between a pastor and his flock must necessarily be restricted by the distance of their abodes, are raised and retained by the force of *pulpit* attractions. Surrounded as you are by men of popular talents, unless you preach the word with ability, "the ways of your Zion will soon mourn because none come to her solemn feasts, and in the time of her affliction she will remember all the pleasant things she had in the days of old."

It is greatly to be regretted, that very many young men who, during the early part of their preparatory studies, appear the fairest blossoms in all the academic grove, disappoint the hopes they had excited, and yield, after all, but ordinary fruit. Two reasons may be assigned for this: the first is, they are sometimes plucked too soon; and the second, that even when gathered in a state of academic maturity, instead of improving, as they should do, by time and care, they become corrupted by indolence, and then sink in the public estimation by gradations as rapid and as numerous as those by which they seemed at one time likely to ascend. Many young men unfortunately cease to be students when they begin to be ministers. They enter upon their office with a stock of ideas, which would be a sufficient capital, if properly improved by indefatigable industry, for attaining to intellectual wealth; but, unfortunately, flattered by the foolish, and caressed, perhaps, for a season by the wise, they act like persons who come suddenly into possession of a small fortune, who begin to live immediately upon the principal, abandon themselves to idleness, and sink to contempt. During the greater part of the week they may be found anywhere but in their study; running all over the city or country to public meetings; sauntering about the houses of their flock in everybody's way; debating upon the conduct of the government with every gossiping politician they can pick up; or else idly reading the fashionable, and, much of it, worthless poetry of the age in their parlors. Saturday arrives, and with it all the tremors and dread produced by the recollection that it is to be followed by the Sabbath. A volume is taken from the shelf, a text selected, perhaps a sermon committed to memory; or else a few meager thoughts, resembling Pharaoh's thin and blighted ears of corn, are gleaned from the stubble of a mind whose scanty crop has long since been carried off. Thus equipped, the preacher goes to his pulpit and his people, with no higher ambition than to get through without actually stopping; "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed," till at length they are literally compelled, in order to save themselves from starvation, to break the fences of their field, and roam in quest of pasture more suited to their taste, and more adequate to their wants. "Give attention, then, to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." St. Paul, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel—a proficient in

all the knowledge of the age, and, in addition to this, blessed with the power of miracles and the gift of celestial inspiration—was certainly the minister, if any one ever existed, who might have dispensed with diligent application to study; and yet this great man, when imprisoned at Rome, and looking forward to his approaching martyrdom, commanded his books and his parchments to be brought him. Here, then, is an example worthy your imitation.

If any thing more need be said to enforce this duty, I might remind you of the present state of society at large in regard to education. An ignorant minister might have done very well when all knowledge was confined to the priesthood, when "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people;" but science and literature are now so widely diffused, even over the middling classes, that no small measure of information is requisite to enable a minister to converse with his own flock. Unless, therefore, you intend to devote eight hours a-day to your study, I have no very strong expectation that you will long retain this pulpit. To secure such a portion of time as this, it will be necessary to guard against the temptations to neglect with which a ministerial station in this mighty city must ever be attended. You will, of course, be expected to use your influence in cherishing that public spirit which, like the holy fire, now burns upon the altar of the Lord. Still, however, you must not suffer foreign duties to interfere with those to be discharged at home. Public meetings, and public speeches, are become very common, and are certainly very useful. I am not by any means reprobating them, but only reminding you, that they should not be suffered to draw a young minister too much from his study and his flock. Guard against all unnecessary party visits. Never, never become a political partisan. This may render you popular with a certain class, but it will consume your time, embitter your spirit, diminish the weight of your ministerial character, and considerably obstruct the success of your labors.

XXV.—HUMAN SYSTEMS.

BY THE REV. A. REED, D. D.

Let us beware of human systems and the love of analysis. Truth, thus divided and decomposed, may cease to be the useful and salient thing it is; as our daily food, by analysis, ceases to be food, and would rather convey poison than nourishment to our animal existence. Ours is a popular service; and analytical and scholastic methods, though they may have their use in the study, would become a serious impediment to us in the pulpit. Let us familiarize our minds with the inspired writers till we catch their spirit and their manner. Observe how they connect precept with promise—prayer with predestination—principle with example—justification with penitence—faith with words—redemption with renewal—and all with God.

Fear not to follow in their track; the finger of God has passed over it. If we mistake not, it will render your ministry both beautiful and efficient; it will exalt your conceptions, and give propriety to your style; it will deliver you from poverty on the one hand, and from affectation on the other; and your services will be a standing exposition on the truth, that "*all* scripture is given for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness."

Then, that your thoughts may not be dissipated over the extensive field which revelation presents to you, you must be careful to *concentrate* them on the *simple design* to which the whole truth is directed. Though given at different times, and by different persons, and beneath different dispensations, it possesses but one single character—it is an *economy of remedial mercy*. It respects men as alienated from the favor and life of God; it proposes their restoration to all that they have forfeited by transgression; and it seeks to realize this object by the appointment of a Mediator. The person and work of this Mediator, therefore, are to be considered as the key to the entire sacred volume. The spirit of prophecy and of type, of example and of fact, of promise and of commandment, is essentially the testimony of Jesus. He was the promise of one dispensation, the gift of the other, and the glory of both!

You will not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ; you will not employ your attainments to palliate and conceal its peculiarities, but rather to commend and enforce them; you will be determined, though worldly wisdom seduce you on the one

tand, and temporizing example on the other, to know nothing in your ministrations except "Jesus Christ and him crucified;" and you will be aware, that in fulfilling such a determination, you will shed the truest honor on your ministry, and render the highest glory to God. The majesty of his person, the perfection of his atonement, the power of his resurrection, his sovereign authority and ineffable grace, you will put forth with a distinctness and prominence which is due to them as the very elements of life and salvation. With his mediation you will connect the creation of the universe, the procedure of divine government, the illustration and harmony of the divine perfections, and the assured and blessed hope of life and immortality.

By thus associating all the fulness of scripture with the name and work of the Redeemer, you will confer on your ministry a two-fold excellence of the rarest kind—comprehension and simplicity. It will be enriched with a perennial variety, and united in a single principle. It will be filled with the effulgence of the "light of life," and all that effulgence will be concentrated in the "Sun of Righteousness."

ESSAYS

ON THE

COMPOSITION AND DELIVERY OF SERMONS.

I.—HISTORY OF THE ART OF CHRISTIAN PREACHING.

BY DAVID FORDYCE, FORMERLY PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE MARISCHAL COLLEGE, ABERDEEN.

I BELIEVE the apostolic manner is a noble pattern for modern preachers in many and important respects. But to copy it too closely, without making proper allowances for the difference of their character and that of the apostles, and of the manners of that age and this in which we live, might perhaps lead the forward imitators into several mistakes. Those apostolic instructors were formed upon the eastern taste and manner. The Jews, and in general the people of those eastern countries, were naturally of a warm imagination. Their perceptions were acute, and their passions violent. They spoke little, and thought much; and what they spoke was generally with great parade and many circumlocutions. When prompted by vehement emotions, or inspired by the sudden sallies of a heated fancy, they broke out into strong metaphors, bold figures, daring images, and a diction often extravagant, and always pompous. We may believe that their manner would be of a piece, full of heat and action, intense and animated, far beyond the ordinary of countries where the fancy and feelings of the inhabitants were upon a lower key. Their voice was raised the higher, that it was seldom exercised; and all their gestures were naturally violent, as being expressive of those internal throes which agitated their minds. Thus we find their prophets—who were professed preachers among them—sometimes delivering their heavenly messages by significant actions or symbols, smiting upon their thigh; throwing themselves prostrate on their faces; covering their heads with sackcloth and with ashes, and the like ex-

pressions of grief, indignation, repentance, &c. The highly figurative religion of the Jews—the frequent revolutions their government underwent—the several national misfortunes they suffered—the high opinion they entertained of themselves as the peculiar people, and of their country as the seat of miracles, the land of prophecy, and the chosen inheritance of God—all contributed to inflame their imaginations, and to give a deeper hue, and more metaphoric tincture, if I may so speak, to their language. Accordingly we see, that the epistolary writings of the apostles, which, we may suppose, came the nearest to their manner of preaching, are full of metaphors, amplifications, characterizing and change of persons, circumlocutions, parentheses, allegories, and frequent allusions to the Hebrew polity, ceremonies, history, and customs. Such strains of writing and preaching were adapted to the genius, and level to the understanding of those to whom they were addressed; but to us they appear stiff, as it were, often obscure, and sometimes unintelligible; and, were they to be drawn too closely into imitation, would be thought unnatural and extravagant, and be in fact incomprehensible to a modern audience, of a taste and manners so widely different as ours generally are.

The dignity of the apostolic character; the supernatural gifts of which those divine men were possessed; and the sublime nature of their commission, derived immediately from heaven, did likewise entitle them to assume a freedom in judging, a severity in rebuking, an authority in commanding, and a majesty in their whole manner of address, which the confessed inferiority of the character of a modern preacher will by no means permit him to emulate, without exposing both the preacher and his preaching to just contempt. Yet, after all, there is often found in the apostolic manner a sublimity of sentiment, a pomp of description, a clearness, strength, and brevity of precept, a closeness of appeal, a force and abruptness of interrogation, a simplicity of words, and pathos of address, that are admirable in themselves, and worthy the imitation of every preacher.

The immediate followers of our Saviour and his apostles, we may believe, imbibed their spirit, and imitated their manner. They were generally men of mean birth and low station; and, as their natural parts were not improved by a polite or learned education, their authority and success in preaching did not depend on their capacity or skill in the arts of oratory, but on the simplicity of their manners, the singular sanctity of their life and character, and the importance and credibility of the testimony they bore to the great facts and doctrines of Christianity, which had been all along supported by such irresistible evidence. It pleased heaven to employ these apparently weak tools in carrying on its great designs, and to send forth those plain men to erect, in opposition to the inveterate prejudices and sensual passions of the world, the cross of a despised Saviour; to erect it upon the ruins of the established religion, and its admired mythology. Accordingly, their artless preaching and indefatigable labors were made successful in removing those prejudices, subduing those passions, and spreading the kingdom of the Messias.

But, in proportion as Christianity took root, extended its branches, and came to be supported by the civil powers, the public teachers of it did soon and greatly degenerate from the glorious pattern of their predecessors; bended the rigor of their maxims to the growing luxury of the age; and affected to please the popular taste by a new and more palatable species of address. The polite arts, and among the rest that of speaking, I observed before, were then greatly corrupted; and this corruption, as must naturally happen, reached both the bar and pulpit. People were grown fond of the florid manner in every thing, and the gaudy and declamatory style became fashionable; far-fetched similes, forced antitheses, labored conceits, rounded periods, and allegorical expositions of scripture, were much in vogue. Some learned fathers, who were late proselytes from the school of Plato to that of Jesus, and who imagined some of the literal senses of scripture inconsistent, or not so well reconcilable with those principles of philosophy which they had early imbibed, explained these away and had recourse to mystical ones. Others, from a well-meant but indiscreet zeal for the spirit, abandoned the dryness of the letter, and, in order to edify their hearers, converted many parts of the sacred story into abstruse spiritual and moral allegories. Thus, for instance, with what art and subtlety does Ambrose explain away Peter's denial of his Master.

and how ungrammatically does he torture and allegorize the words to support his own unnatural hypothesis! With what a jejune violence does he apply the persons in the Song of Solomon, one to the body, the other to the soul of the dead emperor Valentinian, in his funeral oration for him! With what impropriety does Jerome level Jeremiah's prophetical reproofs of the Jews for their superstition and idolatry, against a Christian widow for a second marriage! How wildly does Justin Martyr talk, in discoursing on the mystery of the cross, which he calls the greatest symbol of dominion and power; without the form of which he affirms that human affairs could not be transacted; and to which he applies all the sticks and pieces of wood mentioned in the Old Testament! How puerile is Irenæus, in carrying on the analogy between the clean and unclean beasts and men; comparing the former, who divide the hoof and chew the cud, to those that believe in the Father and in the Son, and that meditate on the law; and the latter to those that do neither! How idly does Clemens allege the Phenix as a type and proof of the resurrection! Into what a trifling play of words does Austin, notwithstanding all his eloquence, fall on a thousand occasions! How luxuriant is even the learned Origen in his allegorical senses, by which he wanted to enrich and diversify the literal, to refine and exalt the simple facts, and by so doing to convey some important truth, or to enforce some useful precept! However, other fathers, especially the Greek, for in the East the just manner of speaking and writing continued longer than in the West, showed better judgment, and a truer taste; studied a more plain and natural turn of preaching; and sought to convince by sound reasoning, and to move by the proper arts of persuasion. Among these, Chrysostom and Basil shone out as the best and most eloquent models. These rejected the vain flourishes and dry stiffness of art, and followed more the simplicity of nature. They were content to explain the scriptures according to their literal and grammatical sense. They reasoned the point, of which they wanted to convince their audience, with closeness and strength of argument; painted things to their very imaginations in their most natural and striking circumstances; and performed all this with such clearness and beauty of language, as at once instructed, edified, and warmed the people. "The style of St. Chrysostom," says a fine judge, "is diffuse; but he speaks no false ornaments; all tends to persuasion. He places every thing with design; he is well acquainted with scripture, and the manners of men; he insinuates himself into the heart—gives a relief and coloring to every thing—has noble thoughts, and is not void of passion." "St. Basil," says the same critic, "is grave, sententious, and austere, even in his diction. He thoroughly understood the gospel-scheme, and the diseases of man, and is a great master in the cure and regimen of souls."

Afterwards, in proportion as the church grew more corrupted, the manner of preaching partook of the common contagion, and sunk into superstition and futility in the explanation of the doctrines of Christianity, or swelled into fustian and false rhetoric in recommending its morals. True faith was involved in fable, mysticism, and wild chimera; true piety was buried under a load of childish and superstitious practices; and true virtue was lost amidst that ambition and luxury which prompted some to be the deluders and tyrants, and that ignorance and sensuality which prepared others to be the dupes and slaves of their fellow-creatures.

The inveterate rust which Gothic ignorance and barbarity had spread over men and things, made all improvements of that kind totally impracticable whilst it continued, and very difficult when it began to wear off. The monks and other priests generally formed themselves upon the worst models they found among the fathers, and indulged in allegory with the utmost wantonness of fancy. Indeed, as the taste for Grecian and Roman learning increased, men of letters began to relish a more chaste manner in composition; Cicero became the great model of those who piqued themselves on a polite strain; and to depart from that established standard was deemed almost heresy by these Ciceronian admirers. But, after all, the gross corruptions of the public religion, in Roman Catholic countries, continued, and I doubt not still continue, a dead weight on the generality of its preachers, and prevent the eloquence of the pulpit from rising to that perfection which the progress of other arts among them might give one reason to expect. It must, indeed,

be allowed, that with regard to the exterior parts of eloquence they equal, perhaps, if not excel, the most finished pulpit orators of their Protestant brethren. Those they study with unwearied assiduity. They have professed teachers among them, who, with infinite sagacity and industry, teach the best rules of speaking, pronouncing, and acting, and point out to them the best models in all these. At the same time, the particular genius, dispositions, and climate of those countries, do naturally infuse into their manner, and of course authorize, a sprightliness and agility which is unfelt, or if felt would hardly be allowed of, in colder and more northern countries.

The French are a lively, loquacious, and witty people. Accordingly, we find their preachers wonderfully warm, diffuse, full of action in the pulpit, as in conversation; fanciful and picturesque in their descriptions; and rather eloquent and wordy, than deeply strong in their conversations. The Italians, who are of a more severe, cautious, and reserved cast in their temper and conversation, show a proportionable difference in their manner of speaking and preaching. Their preachers are subtle, acute, and refined; of a less vivacious, yet more commanding action than the French; full of spirit and passion, yet more smooth and artful in managing them. Though this may be generally true of the common rule, yet both nations have given us good models of strong reasoning and masterly eloquence, equally accommodated to please the most refined taste, and to affect the most vulgar. The Spanish manner, like that of the nation, is more solemn, stately, and full of figures formed for ostentation, and proudly swelling with all the pomp of rhetoric. Their genius is piercing and sublime; and though, perhaps, as full of fire as any of their neighbors, yet more chastened by the stiffness and haughtiness of their manners. If I durst, in like manner, hazard a criticism upon the English method of preaching, I should say it had its peculiarity, adapted to the genius of the people. This I take to be less loquacious than the French, less reserved than the Italian, more phlegmatic and saturnine than both. As they are generally open and candid themselves, they dislike the appearance of art in others, especially in those who address them. Their passions resemble their climate, being generally cold and inconstant; but their opulence, and the freedom of their government, make them bolder and less cautious in expressing them. They are thoughtful, grave, and much subject to the spleen and vapors, to sudden flows of good-humor, and frequent fits of bad.

Now, though the general turn of preaching among them resembles their national complexion, and is mostly in a cool, dispassionate key; yet has it always taken a tincture from the particular character of the different ages, and the periodical constitutions, if I may so say, of the nation, as they have been more or less refined, calm or turbulent, sober or luxurious. But to trace these nicer differences would, I am afraid, lead us into too great a detail, and require a deeper and more extensive knowledge of the times than I can pretend to.

I acknowledge, I have sometimes considered those changes, and have imagined I could observe a real diversity in their several manners which have prevailed. But it is only a few of the most obvious which I dare venture to guess at, rather than undertake to ascertain.

Soon after the Reformation, when the two nations fell under one head, the first appearance that preaching made was in the pompous, metaphorical dress. Our learned king brought learning into vogue; and to quote Greek and Latin authors, even in common conversation, was fashionable and courtly. His sacred majesty deigned to instruct as well as to govern his people. His obsequious and docile pupils, both clergy and laity, vied with each other who should imbibe fastest the liberal stream, and admire most implicitly the awful dictates of their anointed tutor. The whole learning of the age was shaped after the royal model—dark, scholastic, and controversial; except what Lord Bacon, by the force of a superior genius, ventured to strike out. The style of preaching was declamatory and figurative, pointed with puns and antithesis, and larded with Greek and Latin quotations. The preachers made a parade of comparing versions, and tracing the originals; distributed the text into cold and dry divisions; adorned their compositions with quibbles and the silly jingle of words becoming schoolboys rather than men and scholars; and often perverted them from their proper design, to inculcate the principles of slavery and arbitrary power, and to

subserve their own sordid and ambitious purposes.

In the next period, things took a different turn. The passions of men were wonderfully inflamed, by the attempts which were made to introduce arbitrary government. The convulsions, vicissitudes, and various calamities of a civil war, roused the spirits of the contending parties, which had been damped, or kept down by the preceding tyranny; filled them with fears and hopes, and hurried them from one extreme to another. In such a situation, the spirit of enthusiasm is most apt to invade the human mind, and to break out into raptures or panics; and, as a perfect freedom in religion succeeded to the severity of ecclesiastic tyranny, the religious passions burst out with a violence proportioned to the restraints they had formerly lain under. Therefore, the genius of preaching resembled that of the age, and ran into a high, pathetic, and enthusiastic vein. A devotional spirit was the general fashion, which every one was obliged to be in, or else to make up by the fairness of the mask for the want of reality. In such circumstances, men were apt to be misled by every ignorant or impudent pretender to extraordinary degrees of zeal and sanctity; and, as it was the interest of the different leaders to have it commonly believed that heaven had listed itself of their party, so the faith of particular divine interpositions in their favor was easily propagated, and greedily swallowed by both sides. If we add to this, that where men's hopes or fears are much raised by the greatness of the venture, and the uncertainty of the issue, they are exceedingly prone to seek assistance, and to expect relief from heaven: I say, putting all this together, it is no wonder that a prodigious spawn of enthusiasts and sectaries appeared, whose minds were like tinder, ready to take fire with every spark, and to kindle into the most furious combustions. Therefore, the dispositions of preachers and people were reciprocally inflaming and inflamed by each other. The tone of preaching was agitated and various, as were the passions of the hearers. It glowed with uncommon fervors, sudden lights, and supernatural impulses, or strong pretences to them, and with a mighty zeal for purity and reformation, whether real or affected. No doubt, there was much seriousness and undissembled ardor, a higher spirit of devotion, a warmer sense of divine things, and stronger affections to a public interest, than have appeared before or since that period. Where these took place, the assistance of learning and human art was often despised as unnecessary, or dreaded as derogatory to higher gifts; and the sober chastenings of judgment gave way to unnatural flights, turgid conceits, a pompous style, and ungoverned action. But where they were wanting, the indiscreet votaries endeavored to supply their room by affected raptures, unmeaning cant, wild grimace, and all the distortions of enthusiasm blended with superstition.

Many of the religious leaders among the sectaries were men of considerable learning and abilities; and in many of their writings we discover a noble unaffected piety, a singular elevation of thought, a great compass of knowledge, and much variety and strength of style. But eloquence had not then attained its true standard; it was overlaid, rather than adorned, by the learning which prevailed; their compositions were irregular and incorrect; and their diction either swollen and figurative, or intricate and dry.

The next age had the merit of refining much upon the manner of their predecessors. The return of peace, and its ordinary attendants, security and wealth, gave people leisure to cultivate all the arts and sciences, which tend to the improvement or ornament of life. It is true, that the enthusiasm and hypocrisy of the former age were succeeded by luxury, dissoluteness of manners, and a wanton contempt of religion; nor were there wanting some mercenary and ambitious divines, who winked at the vices of the court, and sought to recommend themselves, by prostituting the dignity of their character and profession to defend or palliate the most despotic measures, and to preach up the principles of slavery and implicit submission to power. Yet that noble spirit of freedom, which had been begotten under the inclemencies of civil and ecclesiastical encroachments, and was nursed and had grown up in the glorious struggle for liberty and equal government, could not be destroyed by the renewed attempts that were made against both, but daily increased, and appeared in a general free inquiry, and in the vigor and boldness of public debates, and of private conversation. The nature and foundations

of religion and government were examined with freedom and candor by some, with severity and even with malice by others. The dangers arising from popery on one hand, and from designs against the constitution on the other, gave a check to the general joy, opened the eyes of the more sober and thoughtful part, and raised a just attention to the common interest. Accordingly, as many able patriots arose to guard us against the latter, so many eminent divines sprang up to protect us against the former. These great men nobly and boldly exploded the principles of implicit faith; inquired, in a rational and unprejudiced manner, into the nature and grounds of true religion; exposed, with proper spirit, the horrors of ecclesiastic tyranny, and by so doing sapped the very foundations of popery. They had formed themselves upon the best models of antiquity, and had imbibed the genius and sentiments of the divine moralists. The effects of this appear in their compositions, which breathe a modest but generous freedom, a sublime and enlightened piety, an exalted taste of morals, such a spirit of moderation, and so pure a flame of universal benevolence, as is most adapted to win the esteem, and reconcile the hearts of mankind. These preachers rubbed off the rust and refined the manner of preaching. Instead of a tedious explication of the text, and giving the concordance of every word in it, as had been the way formerly, they plainly and briefly opened its connection and meaning, and then stated the propositions arising out of it, in their nature, truth, and reasonableness. Instead of discussing some nice and barren points of controversy in a scholastic manner, they painted the beauty and advantages of substantial virtue with great strength of reason, and perspicuity of style; and, instead of concluding their discourses coldly, with a few short inferences or uses, as they were called, they wound them up with a pathetic and manly address, in which they applied the whole to the consciences and lives of their hearers. Whereas the strain of former sermons was either flat or low, being wire-drawn with controversial disputes, and having the sense scattered by such spurious mixtures as did not enter into the body of the work, but rather stuck out like so many excrescences; or else the style swelled into a ridiculous kind of bombast, and sometimes an unintelligible jargon. The compositions of this new race of preachers were more according to the genuine simplicity and beauty of nature. Their diction was easy, clear, and nervous, pregnant with sentiment, adorned with apt metaphors and splendid figures; and those not far-fetched, or high-strained, but such as grew out of the subjects, and were the most proper to enlighten and affect the auditory. They cut off all unnecessary shows of learning—applied close to the matter in hand—and pursued throughout some weighty and important point, without enervating the discourse by useless digressions, or crumbling it down into minute divisions. In short, they vindicated our faith upon the principles of sound reason; showed the connection between natural and revealed religion with all the strength of evidence; displayed the excellence of both, with regard to private and public happiness, in the most engaging light; and painted genuine Christianity with that venerable air and masculine beauty which distinguishes her alike from mean superstition and rank enthusiasm, and, instead of inspiring with contempt and dread, commands love and admiration. This, my friend, I take to be the period in which the art of preaching was carried, though not to perfection, yet to the highest pitch of beauty it had before, or has ever since attained.

II.—ON A NATURAL MANNER, &c, IN PREACHING.

BY THE REV. JAMES FORDYCE.

Had I occasion to converse with those young men who have devoted themselves to the church, I would address them in some such manner as the following:—"Gentlemen, the profession you have chosen is inexpressibly noble. There cannot be a more grand, or a more beneficent design, than that of making men good and happy. I sincerely wish you all manner of success. I doubt not in the least of your succeeding, if, before you attempt to recommend religion to others, you take care to cultivate a high commanding sense of it in yourselves. Such a sense of it, like some divine inspiring genius, will at once conduct and animate you. Do but figure to yourselves a preacher, who feels the charm of goodness, who understands the

worth of immortal minds, who is impressed with the whole weight of eternity. Will such a preacher content himself with a dry insipidity of manner, and appear quite regardless whether he affects his audience or not? Or will he confine his attention to the bare formality of art, and seem only solicitous to personate with applause, to strut in the parade of a gaudy eloquence, and sparkle an hour in the public eye? Oh no! he will equally hate such indifference on the one hand, and scorn such pedantry on the other. He will consider himself as a priest of the Most High, detest appearing cold to the interests of his God, and disdain burning incense in his temple, and on his altar, to the despicable idol of popularity. He will address his fellow-worshippers with deep and awful concern, in the words of truth and soberness, like one standing in the presence and speaking in the name of Jehovah; and what he speaks will carry such an air of sacred simplicity and undissembled worth, as must command at the same time belief and reverence. Even the most familiar and ordinary things he utters will touch, being uttered from a feeling heart. But his more important and solemn sentiments will strike, like so many sublime responses issuing from the centre of some venerable sanctuary.

"Believe me, one plain serious discourse, breathed out from the depth of your breasts, will penetrate ours more effectually than a hundred fine flourished harangues, which appear the labor of the brain only, or the mere play of an artificial rhetoric. Degenerate as the most of us hearers are, be assured we secretly respect and admire the image of virtue wherever we behold it; but above all we respect and admire it in a clergyman. How insincere soever many of us may be, we love to hear the language of the heart, it hath something in it so genuine, so native, so emphatical. We are charmed to see a preacher in good earnest with us; we think he regards us and believes himself; and therefore we are inclined both to regard and believe him. When his soul flies out into his discourse, ours immediately breaks away as it were to meet it. If the flame of holy affection really burns in his bosom, it will not fail to burst out; and when it doth, it will instantly seize each sympathetic bosom, and run, and dart, and spread, like some sudden conflagration.

"We are all strangely delighted and moved with what is natural. Let what you say be but natural, and it will of course be pleasing and persuasive. But men only speak naturally when they speak sincerely; that is, what they think and feel. Take care to think and to feel the very things you would inspire; you shall then, and then alone, be truly eloquent. Every address will then flow from an inward source—that well of living water your Master speaks of; every thought will be transparent; every word, look, and motion will present the picture of your mind. The ornaments of air, voice, and gesture with which you strive to set off your sermons, will seem not so much mere ornaments as living graces, the amiable offspring of a beauteous soul.

"Need I observe to you, that there must ever be a sensible difference between the performance of that preacher in whose breast nothing reigns but irreligion or indifference, and his whose heart is fraught with piety, and warmed with all the generous kindlings of a fervent virtue. Something hollow or worthless will certainly be discovered by a sagacious eye in the performances of the one; an air of sincerity, devotion, and benevolence, will always appear in those of the other. That fervent virtue I just now spoke of, will be a kind of intellectual sun fixed in the centre of the human system. It will not only unfold and invigorate the powers of the soul, dilate and brighten all its conceptions; but extend on occasions its influence to the body, illuminate every feature, give spirit to the melody of sound, and strength to the nerve of motion. In this case, the several parts of action will be but the dispreadings of those internal rays which will stream and flash out with irresistible power.

"Besides, a consciousness of superior worth will add a peculiar dignity and freedom to all your addresses, at the same time that its never-failing companion, a superior modesty, will prevent any thing like presumption or forwardness. Then, by cultivating a quick and strong sensibility to the best interests of mankind, you will acquire in a greater degree a certain flowing tenderness, or benevolent meltingness of nature, which, when supported by real sense and spirit, I have always observed to soften and dissolve an audience beyond any thing whatever. There is a tear; yes, a manly

tear may be shed by compassion over the frailties of human nature, and miseries of human kind, forced out by a big-swollen heart. I would never have you ashamed of it. It is the tear of virtue; it becomes the Christian orator well; Jesus wept.

"Permit me to add, that you must join to all your other qualifications for the pulpit, a liberal and sublime devotion, which will be of the greatest use in all your performances. By often approaching to the fountain of wisdom and of goodness, you will every day grow wiser and better. You will, as one who was at once a king, a saint, and a poet expresses it, see light in God's light; you will behold divine objects through a divine medium; and when you behold such objects through such a medium, they cannot, I think, fail to appear exquisitely fair and enchanting. By those approaches, too, you will catch a benign heat from that boundless fire of love, which flows forever from the original fountain of love, and insinuates itself powerfully into every breast that lies open to its sacred influences, expanding and cherishing all the principles of humanity.

"Then, by frequently stretching your minds to take in the ideas of infinite perfection, they must of necessity swell and soar into a peculiar amplitude and elevation. The same exercises, likewise, by often calling forth the best powers of the soul into action, and winding it up to the highest pitch of sentiment and affection, will prevent the languor that might otherwise grow upon you from your constant familiarity with spiritual subjects; will preserve in you a peculiar vivacity of soul, or exquisiteness of temperament; and make every religious string, so to say, more intense and tunient.

"What fine effects all this must have on your public appearances, not only by throwing more light, warmth, and noble passion into your compositions, but by transfusing a higher flame through all your manner, and rendering it more vivid, more strenuous, and more exalted, you, gentlemen, can better imagine than I can tell you. In short, by means of such an intercourse with heaven, you will step from your closets into the pulpit breathing a certain ethereal air, and laboring with the very spirit of truth and love, which flows from the divinity, and tends towards him."

III.—THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

BY THE REV ROBERT HALL, A. M.

In attempting to realize the design of the Christian ministry, we are proposing to call the attention of men from the things which are seen and temporal, to things unseen and eternal; to conduct them from a life of sense to a life of faith; to subdue, or weaken at least, the influence of a world which, being always present, is incessantly appealing to the senses, and soliciting the heart, in favor of a state, whose very existence is ascertained only by testimony. We call upon them to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to deny the strongest and most inveterate propensities, and to renounce the enjoyments which they have tasted and felt, for the sake of a happiness to which they have no relish. We must charge *them*, as they value their salvation, not to love the world, who have been accustomed to make it the sole object of their attachment, and to return to their allegiance to that almighty and invisible Ruler from whom they have deeply revolted. We present to them, it is true, "a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined;" we invite them to entertainments more ample and exquisite than, but for the gospel, it had entered into the heart of man to conceive; but we address our invitations to minds fatally indisposed, alienated from the life of God, with little sense of the value of his favor, and no delight in his converse. The souls we address, though originally formed for these enjoyments, and utterly incapable of being happy without them, have lost, through the fall, that right taste and apprehension of things, which is requisite for the due appreciation of these blessings; and like Ezekiel, we prophesy to dry bones in the valley of vision, which will never live but under the visitation of that breath which bloweth where it listeth. This indisposition to the things of God, so radical and incurable by human power, as it has been a frequent source of discouragement to the faithful minister, so it would prove an invincible obstacle to success, did that success depend upon human agency.

To these difficulties, which arise from the nature of the work, abstractedly considered, must be added those which are modified by a variety of circumstances, and which result from that diversity of temper

character, and situation, which prevails in our auditory. To the several classes of which it consists, it is necessary "rightly to divide the word of truth, and give to every one his portion of meat in due season." The epidemic malady of our nature assumes so many shapes, and appears under such a variety of symptoms, that these may be considered as so many distinct diseases, which demand a proportionate variety in the method of treatment; nor will the same prescription suit all cases. A different set of truths, a different mode of address, is requisite to rouse the careless, to beat down the arrogance of a self-justifying spirit, from what is necessary to comfort the humble and contrite in heart; nor is it easy to say which we should most anxiously guard against—the infusion of a false peace, or inflaming the wounds which we ought to heal. A loose and indiscriminate manner of applying the promises and threatenings of the gospel is ill-judged and pernicious; it is not possible to conceive a more effectual method of depriving the sword of the Spirit of its edge, than adopting that lax generality of representation, which leaves its hearer nothing to apply, presents no incentive to self-examination, and, besides its utter inefficiency, disgusts by the ignorance of human nature, or the disregard to its best interests, it infallibly betrays. Without descending to such a minute specification of circumstances, as shall make our addresses personal, they ought unquestionably to be characteristic, that the conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual know where to class himself. The preacher, who aims at doing good, will endeavor, above all things, to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. At the day of judgment, the attention excited by the surrounding scene, the strange aspect of nature, the dissolution of the elements, and the last trump, will have no other effect than to cause the reflections of the sinner to return with a more overwhelming tide on his own character, his sentence, his unchanging destiny; and, amid the innumerable millions who surround him, he will *mourn apart*. It is thus the Christian minister should endeavor to prepare the tribunal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers on himself.

To men of different casts and complexions, it is obvious, a corresponding difference in the selection of topics, and the method of appeal, is requisite. Some are only capable of digesting the first principles of religion, on whom it is necessary often to inculcate the same lessons with the reiteration of parental solicitude; there are others of a wider grasp of comprehension, who must be indulged with an ampler variety, and to whom views of religion less obvious, less obtrusive, and demanding a more vigorous exercise of the understanding, are peculiarly adapted. Some are accustomed to contemplate every subject in a light so cool and argumentative, that they are not easily impressed with any thing which is not presented in the garb of reasoning; nor apt, though firm believers in revelation, to be strongly moved by naked assertions, even from that quarter. There are others of a softer temperament, who are more easily won by tender strokes of pathos. Minds of an obdurate make, and which have been rendered callous by long habits of vice, must be appalled and subdued by the terrors of the Lord; while others are capable of being "drawn with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man. Some we must save with fear, plucking them out of the fire; on others we must have compassion, making a difference." You will recollect, that He who spake as never man spake, mild, gentle, insinuating in his addresses to the multitude, reserved the thunder of his denunciations for sanctimonious hypocrites. In this part of our ministerial function, we shall do well to imitate St. Paul, who became all things to all men, that he might win some; combining, in his efforts for the salvation of souls, the utmost simplicity of intention, with the utmost versatility of address.

May I be permitted to remark, though it seem a digression, that in the mode of conducting our public ministrations, we are, perhaps, too formal and mechanical; that in the distribution of the matter of our sermons, we indulge too little variety, and exposing our plan in all its parts, abate the edge of curiosity, by enabling the hearer to anticipate what we intend to advance. Why should that force which surprise gives to every emotion, derived from just and affecting sentiments, be banished from the pulpit, when it is found of such moment in every other kind of public address?

cannot but imagine, the first preachers of the gospel appeared before their audience with a more free and unfettered air, than is consistent with the narrow trammels to which, in these latter ages, discourses from the pulpit are confined. The sublime emotions with which they were fraught, would have rendered them impatient of such restrictions; nor could they suffer the impetuous stream of argument, expostulation, and pathos, to be weakened, by diverting it into the artificial reservoirs, prepared in the heads and particulars of a modern sermon. Method, we are aware, is an essential ingredient in every discourse designed for the instruction of mankind, but it ought never to force itself on the attention as an object apart; never appear to be an end, instead of an instrument; or beget a suspicion of the sentiments being introduced for the sake of the method, not the method for the sentiments. Let the experiment be tried on some of the best specimens of ancient eloquence; let an oration of Cicero or Demosthenes be stretched upon a Procrustes' bed of this sort, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, the flame and enthusiasm which have excited admiration in all ages, will instantly evaporate; yet no one perceives a want of method in these immortal compositions, nor can any thing be conceived more remote from incoherent rhapsody.

IV.—RULES FOR THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON.

BY THE REV. P. DODDRIDGE, D. D.

1. TAKE some previous time for devout meditation on your subject, especially if it be devotional, as it generally will be; preach it over to your own souls. Observe thoughts when arising warm from the heart; and set them down with peculiar care as some of your greatest treasures. If one view appear more affecting than another, make a proper memorandum of it.

2. Choose to compose when you are in your best frame, *cæt. par.* Therefore take such time, that if you should be under any particular indisposition for study, or meet with any interruption in it, you may not be forced upon it at so unfavorable a season. But take care that you do not too soon conclude yourselves incurably unfit; the frame often mends. Take notice as to what parts of the day you are most inclined, and in the best frame to compose, and secure those hours to yourselves. Generally early in the morning or late in the evening are the best times; unless you have an extraordinary command of retirement. But let not the intermediate hours be lost.

3. Begin the work with a solemn address to God. This will lay you in the way of his blessing and assistance; and will naturally have some good influence to awaken, compose, and encourage your soul; it will direct your minds to right ends and views, which is a matter of vast importance. Perhaps a form of prayer might not be improper for that purpose; yet varied with some particular regard to your subject. [The following form was drawn up for this purpose by Dr. Doddridge:—]

"Blessed God! It was thou that gavest me a rational soul, and upon thee do I depend entirely for the continuance of those capacities with which thou hast endowed me. I am not sufficient of myself, so much as to think any thing as I ought, but all my sufficiency is of thee.

"I am now engaging in a work of singular importance, in which I would desire to be sensible of the need I have of thy gracious assistance. I beg that thou wilt command my attention to the affair before me. May no vain or intruding thoughts break in upon me, to hinder a steady application to my business. Direct my mind to proper thoughts; and to the most agreeable manner of arranging and expressing them. And may my heart be inflamed with pious affections; that divine truth coming warm from my own soul may more easily penetrate into the souls of my hearers: may I remember that I am not to compose an harangue to acquire for myself the reputation of an eloquent orator; but that I am preparing food for precious and immortal souls; and dispensing that sacred gospel which my Redeemer brought from heaven, and sealed with his blood. May I therefore sincerely endeavor to give my discourse the most useful turn, and do thou direct me so to form it, as best to promote the great purpose of Christian edification.

"And grant, O Lord, that I may receive present refreshment to myself, and future edification from the study of those divine truths I am entering upon; and may this be one of the most delightful employments of my life. While I am watering others, may I myself be watered also; and bring

forth daily more and more fruit, proportionable to the advantages which I enjoy, to the glory of thy great name, and for the improvement of my everlasting felicity, through Jesus Christ. Amen."

4. When just setting to the work, ask yourselves such questions as these, on a view of the scheme you have drawn up:

I. How shall the sermon begin? Let it not be always with mentioning the context, though it may sometimes be allowed, or indeed necessary. Use a variety of *exordia*, sometimes, by scripture stories; sometimes, by quotations and allusions; sometimes, by similes; at others, by a weighty, laconic sentence; and sometimes fall directly upon your subject, especially when it is so copious that you will be in danger of exceeding the time. Endeavor in this part of your sermon to awaken the attention of your auditory, and to raise their expectations, but not too high. Let it be always modest, without any extraordinary flights; and leave no room for suspicion, that it was composed merely to display the orator; this would lead your hearers to dispute your sincerity; and it is better to walk, than attempt to fly where your wings will not bear you. If you have any invocation, let it be after your general division, peculiarly appropriate, and more frequently expressed as a wish than as a direct prayer; and so contrived that it may intimate to the hearers what they ought to be concerned about in attending to the discourse.

II. Does the text need explication? If it does, what explication? Do not make difficulties for the sake of removing them; nor in a dull manner set yourselves, as Dr. Clarke often does, to show the various senses in which any word found in the text is used in scripture; unless it may, as it sometimes will, furnish useful thoughts. When the difficulty is real, and especially where it is not touched upon by commentators, state and remove it in a few strong words. Do not introduce the sentiments of various commentators, it only confounds; nor a variety of readings and versions; nor deviate from our own without real necessity; and when you do, fix upon the translation you think the best, and drop the rest; or at least but briefly touch upon them, so as not to appear divided in your own mind, and as at a loss which to choose, lest it should produce some ill effect upon the audience, by leading them to suppose that the scripture itself is an uncertain thing. When your text expresses some noble important sentiment, in a very forcible manner, you may make it the subject of the greater part of your discourse without incurring any just blame. Nothing dignifies a sermon more than this plan, nor does a greater honor to scripture. Search the context for proper thoughts; and if there be any difficulties in the neighborhood of it, endeavor to illustrate them by a few expressive and important words; and which, to the more judicious of your hearers, must appear to be an abstract of a much larger criticism in your own mind.

III. What passions are to be raised, and what figures of speech are to be used? Take care of misplaced oratory. Take care not to mistake declamation for raising the passions. Much stronger, and yet gentler machines must be used for this purpose. If God be introduced as speaking, it must be in a few awful, and generally, scripture words.

IV. What "strain" of preaching is most suited to the subject in general, and select parts in particular? When these are fixed, endeavor to recollect who are the greatest masters in these "strains," and how they would have expressed themselves had they been in your place?

V. What regard to Christ and the Holy Spirit may properly be introduced into this discourse? Does it naturally lead to them? If not, how may they least unnaturally be introduced or connected? Sometimes for want of this question they have been too much forgotten.

VI. What quotations can properly be introduced from scripture? Generally, have one or two under each head, which may illustrate as much as possible its true sense. In the application, some that are very pathetic should always be introduced, the pathos of which ought to be illustrated from other writings, particularly by remarkable thoughts, figures, or laconic sentences, which you have met with in your reading. For this purpose often review your common-place book, and sometimes note down thoughts you design for this purpose in your book of schemes.

VII. What use can be made of my acquaintance with the world, in this sermon?—Have I made any observations on it, or seen any thing lately that may furnish me with a useful thought?

VIII. When shall I address the conscience?—Remember that the final appli-

cation, reflections, or inferences, are not the *only* places in which to introduce your addresses to the converted and unconverted, the ignorant, the careless, the luxurious, and profane, the moralist and the hypocrite, the wavering and irresolute, the doubting, tempted, and dejected in spirit, the backsliding, the confirmed, zealous, and joyful; nor to the aged and the young, the prosperous and afflicted, the rich and poor; the healthy and infirm, those who have lost friends, &c. Represent to yourselves these and various other cases, and let each be seasonably noticed.

IX. What shall the conclusion be? Do not leave off merely because you have nothing more to say, but be sure to close handsomely. Frequently close, though not always, with a thought of consolation; at other times full of terror; and often with a graceful scripture. Have some sprightly thoughts, if possible, at the conclusion of each head.

5. Often recollect your character and station in life. I am a man, and not a boy. To crowd my discourse with *puerile* ornaments is like an academic, just come from school. "All I write must be judicious, or it will be contemptible. I am a servant of God, and not of the world, or of men. I must approve myself to the great God; in all things I must promote his interest, and write and speak as in his presence." And, to feel these sentiments more sensibly, intermingle devout and deeply humble, though silent ejaculations while composing. "I am a minister of Christ, and not a deist, or a heathen philosopher. I am to preach the gospel,—that gospel which Christ brought down from heaven, and died to confirm. I am, in one sense, a successor of the apostles, and am engaged in carrying on the scheme in which they and their Lord were engaged. Am I a preacher among plain Christians, not scholars or courtiers? Let my sermons be adapted to their capacities." Imagine yourselves in the pulpit, and your congregation around you, and sometimes preach over some heads before you write them. "Lastly, I and my hearers are dying creatures. I am, perhaps, composing my last sermon, a sermon which I may not live to deliver." This method of recollecting yourselves produces a genuine air of seriousness, profitable to yourselves and to your hearers.

6. Compose as much of your sermon as you can at a sitting. Choose to do this when you are in a good frame. It will give a graceful freedom to your style, and when you have prepared your materials, it wil not be difficult to dispatch your sermon in five or six hours.

7. If in the course of your composition you find your thoughts wander and droop, endeavor to revive them by holy ejaculations. Beg of God to bring by his Spirit suitable scriptures to your remembrance, in order to help you to open doctrines clearly, to state them truly, and to apply them seriously. He knows what is in man, and can lead you to come at what you ought always most to seek, *the hearts* of your hearers.

8. Give your sermons a very attentive and critical review. Lop off excrescences, divide sentences which are too long, and if you can find time, transcribe the whole again. For this purpose begin soon enough; let your general schemes be drawn up a week beforehand. Read and enrich your schemes by additional thoughts and conversation on Monday and Tuesday; on Wednesday and Thursday compose your sermon; and on Saturday review and transcribe it. Practise this method *seven years*, and it will become natural and easy.

V.—THE COMPOSITION OF SERMONS

BY THE REV J. EDMONDSON, A. M.

THE composition of sermons should occupy a considerable portion of your time. If you neglect this part of your duty, you cannot excel in preaching, whatever attainments you may have made in literature. But if you carefully attend to the following rules, you will be workmen who need not be ashamed, "rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Tim. ii. 15.

I. *Never preach, on any occasion, without previous study.* The man who ascends the pulpit without previous preparation cannot render much service to the people. He may utter many words, and make a great noise; but his words are without knowledge, and his sound without sense. His unpremeditated harangues dishonor the sacred cause; and are an insult offered to his intelligent hearers. He may think himself inspired, the ignorant may admire his verbosity, and he may pass for an oracle with a few; but in reality he is an empty, incoherent declaimer, and a wild enthusiast.

Do we find any thing like it at the bar, or in the senate? The lawyer must have a correct brief, before he can plead the cause of his client; and the statesman must have a well-digested plan, before he proposes any new measure to the legislative body. And shall a minister of Jesus take less pains in preaching the everlasting gospel, than the lawyer in his pleadings, or the senator in the formation and proposal of human laws? He who preaches without previous study must either have a very high opinion of himself, or a very low opinion of his hearers; and in either case, he goes astray himself and leads his people astray. He talks strangely about supernatural aid, and leaves all, as he pretends, to the Holy Spirit; but what right has any man to expect divine assistance, who wilfully neglects the use of proper means? But did not our Lord say to his disciples, "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak?" Matt. x. 19. We reply, this passage does not relate to preaching, but to the answers which were to be given by the apostles, when they were summoned to appear before councils, rulers, and kings; and in that case divine inspiration was necessary, because it could not be known beforehand what questions might be proposed, or what answers might be necessary. But let no indolent preacher take shelter under a passage of scripture which he does not understand. Rather let him apply diligently to his studies, and then he may rationally hope for the help of God. Does an architect build without a plan? Does a prudent tradesman launch out into business without a plan? Both the one and the other may improve his plan as he proceeds in his work; and the preacher, who does not read his sermons, may improve his subject in the pulpit, by many new and striking thoughts; but his plan should be well laid before he enters on his work.

II. *Before you enter on the study of a sermon, humbly pray to God for the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit.* No business should be undertaken without prayer; much less that of composing sermons. Our heavenly Father, who knoweth all things, is the fountain of wisdom; and if any man "lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him," James i. 5. Before you proceed one step in your preparation for the pulpit, kneel down before him, and pray for direction in the choice of a subject; pray for that light which will unfold the meaning of the passage which you may select; and pray for assistance in the selection of suitable matter to fill up your discourse. By earnest prayer and supplication, the mind is well prepared for this important study; and when the Holy Spirit directs our thoughts, our compositions are pure and spiritual. When our fire is taken from the sacred altar, it burns and shines to the glory of God, and we are made burning and shining lights; but when prayer is neglected, our compositions are mere human efforts, and a fire of our own kindling. What good can we expect from this plan? We are like a benighted traveller, who makes a fire to warm himself, and lights a torch to direct his steps; but, after all, lies down in sorrow. "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow," Isaiah l. 11. A minister, above all men, should walk in "the light of the Lord;" but if he neglect prayer, he walks in his own light, and wanders in his own self-confidence. It is only when he takes counsel of the Lord that his ways are directed by unerring wisdom, and he becomes a safe guide to those who walk in darkness.

III. *Having taken counsel of God, make a judicious choice of your text; for if you miss your way in that, you cannot work much good.* In the choice of your text, consider what is most likely to be useful to your congregation, and abide by that; not regarding either your own ease, or the empty bubble of popular applause. If you consult your own ease, you will not fail to select a passage which you can manage without much difficulty; and, then, there will be a tiresome sameness in all your sermons; and if you aim at popularity, you will select a text which will enable you to shine with great splendor before your hearers. But as usefulness is the grand end of preaching, you should consider what is most wanted by your people; and choose that subject, however difficult to yourselves, which will promote their best interests. The praise of men should be lost sight of in this great work. When you are honored by worthy men, be thankful, and use

it for the divine glory; but never let the applause of erring mortals be the end of your ministrations in holy things.

It would be a useful plan, in your regular course of reading the holy scriptures, to select those passages for texts which may suit your purposes on future occasions; and if you keep a list of these, arranged under proper heads, you will seldom be at a loss for a suitable text. For instance, select a course of texts on the being and attributes of God; on divine providence; on redemption and grace; on the character, influences, and operations of the Holy Spirit; on the terms of salvation; on Christian duties; on promises and threatenings; on sacred biography; on remarkable historical events; and on any other subject which may claim particular attention. Such selections have been published by Dr. Enfield, Bishop Gastrel, and others; but you will find your own more useful than those of other men; because every passage of your choice has made some particular impression on your own mind.

Sometimes you will find it necessary to select a short text, and at other times a long one; but whether it be long or short, let it always include the complete sense of the sacred writer. Quaint and comical texts are never taken by men of correct taste. What, then, shall we think of those who take one or two words out of a sentence, and which, when detached from the passage where they are found, have no meaning at all? Mr. ——, a popular preacher, with a certain class of hearers, took the word *nothing* for his text; and we may be quite sure his sermon was good for nothing. Another, where I was once stationed, preached four sermons on the word *if;* but if he had been asleep all the time, his congregation would not have suffered any loss. Near forty years ago, a self-conceited preacher in the neighborhood of the metropolis, told me he had been preaching from these words, in the first psalm, "a tree." And I have heard of others who have chosen such texts as these, "old shoes, and clouted;" "set on the great pot;" "a bell and a pomegranate." But these foolish persons are, without exception, a disgrace to the sacred office.

IV. *Having chosen a proper text, let it be your first care to understand it critically, without which you cannot explain it correctly.* Propose this question to yourselves What is the meaning of the Holy Ghost in this passage? And do not presume to preach from it, till you have fully discovered that meaning, lest you should expose your own ignorance, and mislead your hearers. That you may understand your text, observe the following rules: first, read the context with care, and in the original, if you be able to do so; secondly, examine all the parallel passages, which you find in the marginal references of the Bible; thirdly, examine the meaning of every important word in the passage; fourthly, consider the design of the whole, for on that your superstructure must be built; and lastly, consult commentators of established reputation. I mention commentators last, because, in my opinion, you should always use your own judgment before you seek the aid of others. But you should not attempt either to divide your text or to collect matter to fill up your sermon, till you have ascertained its genuine import; for in either case you work in the dark, and build without a solid foundation. The following specimens are inserted in this place to put you on your guard: a certain preacher took this passage for a text, "Wilt thou go with this man?" And without adverting to the meaning of his text, he first considered the character of the man Christ Jesus; and, secondly, urged sinners to go with him to the heavenly Canaan. Another took these words, "Up, get ye out of this place;" and his whole sermon was founded on the word *up*. To sinners he said, up into repentance; to penitents, up into justification; to the justified, up into sanctification; and to the sanctified, up into glory. He asked me how I should preach from it, to which I replied, I should have said, Up out of bed, and make your escape from this devoted city. No doubt these good men said many useful things; but they evidently perverted the word of God, and made a jingle of words the basis of their sermons.

V. *It is of considerable importance to introduce your subject, on all occasions, in a natural and easy manner.* This may be done, in some instances, by a short and comprehensive view of the context; especially, when the sense of your text depends on the preceding verses. It may be necessary in some exordiums, to unfold your whole design, that your congregation may feel a lively interest in all you are about to advance. On some occasions, the peculiar

circumstances of the people, and recent occurrences of a singular character, may furnish matter for a good introduction; but all these are precarious, and should not preclude a regular and well-digested plan. But always take care that your introduction be short, clear, convincing, and without pomp and vain display.

Though we give these directions in this place, yet we beg leave to observe, that your introduction should be composed, in general, after you have formed the plan of your sermon; that you may conduct your hearers into the beautiful building which you have erected, in the most pleasant and agreeable way.* Then your whole plan is before you, in all its bearings; and you can see clearly how to introduce it to the best advantage. But how can you form a correct idea on this subject, before you know what your sermon will contain? The subjects of sermons are so various, that no fixed rules can be laid down, which will suit every case; and after all that can be said, much must be left to your own good sense. But you should carefully avoid long, dry, and tedious introductions; because they offend your judicious hearers, and hurt your usefulness; and when you adopt this unhappy plan, the people generally wish you to leave off where you intend to begin. Men of sense cannot endure a long and uninteresting explanation of ten or fifteen verses preceding your text. This method shows a bad taste, lowers you in the estimation of all good judges, and injures the cause of truth.

VI. *Divide your sermons correctly; and arrange your matter methodically.* The number of heads in your sermon must be determined by the number of parts in your text; for the one should answer to the other, without variation.† The following rules, on this subject, may be followed with safety: first, let your text, critically understood, form the basis of your sermon; secondly, let your general divisions include the entire sense of your text; thirdly, in all your divisions, keep a steady eye to the unity of design, in the passage before you; and fourthly, never add a general head which is not found in your text. On this plan, the number of your general heads will vary with your subject, and on one occasion you will have two, on another three, and on another four. But when the number exceeds four, you should treat your subject by way of general and continued observation, which will admit of many more: yet in that case, you should pass from one part to another by easy transitions, that you may preserve the unity and beauty of the whole subject. This is called textual preaching; and if you do not preach textually, why do you take a text? A single word, taken from the dictionary, would suit a topical preacher. He delivers highly polished moral essays, like those of Addison's Spectator, or Johnson's Rambler; but you are bound by the highest authority, to PREACH THE WORD. The text of a fashionable preacher is a mere motto, which has no more to do with his sermon, than a passage out of Homer's Iliad; but your sermons should open the Holy Scriptures, that the people may see wondrous things in the law of their God. It would be useful both to them and yourselves, to deliver lectures, occasionally, on large and interesting portions of Holy Writ. But when you adopt that plan, every verse which contains a complete sense, should be divided and arranged in the most exact and lucid order. This was the plan of preaching in the purest ages of Christianity.*

But whether your text be a long one or a short one, always divide and subdivide with exactness. Your subdivisions should be few, and always to the point; naturally arising out of the subject, and calculated to illustrate its meaning. Then your discourse will resemble a compact building, to which nothing of real use can be added, and from which nothing can be safely taken away. You will find a great number of

* When you have formed your whole plan, search among your inferences, for the most easy and natural one; this will furnish a good introduction; but take care that it do not afterwards appear, at least in the same light.—*Lawson's Lectures concerning Oratory.*

† Division, in general, ought to be restrained to a small number of parts; they should never exceed four or five at the most: the most admired sermons have only two or three parts.—*Claude.*

* Sermons in those times, were nothing else but the exposition of some part of the scriptures which had been read before, and exhortations to the people to obey the doctrines contained in them: and commonly were upon the lesson which was last read, because that being fresh in the people's memory, was most proper to be treated of, as St. Augustin both avers the custom and gives the reason.—*Cave on Primitive Christianity.*

subdivisions extremely perplexing. They confuse your own mind, embarrass your hearers, and prolong your sermons beyond all reasonable bounds. This is the great fault of Beveridge's Thesaurus Theologicus: a work which contains many useful hints, and good references. If you adopt his plan, you will not find it difficult to say, with a good old Scotch Divine, *Seventy-fifthly;* but your hearers may ask, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel, by words without knowledge?" Job xxxviii. 2.

But why should we name our division to a congregation? Is it not better to conceal our plan? We reply, First, your hearers should know that you have a plan, or they may be tempted to think you preach at random; secondly, they should be prepared, by the announcement of your plan, to follow you closely in the execution of it; and thirdly, this will enable them to remember it afterwards. But if you omit the statement of your plan, whatever impression you make by a few brilliant expressions, they will forget the drift and design of your sermon; and that being lost, the great end of preaching is completely defeated.

VII. *Having formed a correct division of your text, proceed to collect useful materials to fill up your sermon.* In this part of your work, attend to the following rules: Study the meaning of important words; prepare clear definitions of things; collect strong proofs of every proposition; and provide ample materials for the illustration of the whole.

First, study the meaning of important words. There are many weighty words, in the sacred writings, which are not understood by your unlearned hearers. These should be made plain to every capacity; for without a knowledge of words there can be no knowledge of things. But our explanations of words should be short, clear, and impressive; and then they will be remembered to considerable advantage. It has been asserted, that the same word has different and contrary meanings in the Holy Scriptures; but if this be true, we shall always be at a loss how to understand the sacred writers. That the same word has different applications is certain; but its radical meaning, except in figurative language, is always the same wherever it occurs. Thus the word salvation, which always signifies a deliverance from evil and danger, is sometimes applied to temporal deliverances, and at other times to those which are spiritual and eternal. Similar observations might be made on many other words which are supposed to have very different meanings; but a judicious divine will always take great care to explain these words so as to leave no doubt or uncertainty on the minds of his sensible hearers.

Secondly, prepare clear definitions of things. Much depends on clear and correct definition. It smooths the path of the preacher; and opens the eyes of the hearer. Many painful disputes have arisen in the religious world, from a want of clear definitions; for when men understand one another, there is not that wide difference in opinion which is generally supposed. Many writers and speakers, whose definitions are obscure, are not understood; and when a man is misunderstood, in any thing which he advances, he is always misrepresented. Your definitions should be as clear as the light of day, and then they will carry conviction to all intelligent men; but if you fail in this part of your work, confusion follows, and you contend in all your arguings with mere shadows.

Thirdly, collect strong proofs of every proposition in your text. The proofs of every doctrine which you advance, and the reasons of every duty which you urge, should be strong, clear, and undeniable; and as the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, your arguments should be drawn from that source. Different subjects will require different proofs; and these should be selected with great care. To assert any thing without proof, will lower you in the eyes of sensible men; in that case the truth will suffer, and unbelievers will triumph. There is no part of your subject which requires greater attention than this; for your success depends upon it in a high degree.

Fourthly, to provide materials for the apt illustration of every part of your subject, is necessary in the study of your sermons. These may be drawn from various sources. The works of creation, history, biography, and the sciences, may be pressed into this service; but the sacred writings should be the principal source of all you bring to illustrate your sermons. There you have an inexhaustible fund of the best materials; for such is the rich variety in

nose books, that, whatever your subject may be, you will be furnished with ample materials for its illustration. Now and then you may illustrate by bold and lofty figures, and by fine classical allusions; but these should be well chosen, well placed, and not too often repeated.

VIII. *As men are divided in their opinions, you should always anticipate objections, and prepare suitable answers.* In the composition of your sermon, keep an eye to every serious objection which may be urged against the truth; and prepare short, clear, and pertinent answers. You have to do with men of widely different views and feelings; one is an infidel; another is a fastidious critic; another is a doubting Christian; and another is a self-conceited pedant; but all must be met by fair argument. Some preachers answer objections after they have passed through their sermon; but this is not the best method. You should clear your way as you go along, and leave nothing behind you that is dark or doubtful. Objections to doctrines and duties are serious things; but when they are removed, much good is done. Be not discouraged in this difficult part of your work. By steady perseverance, you will either convince or confound unbelievers; and sinners will either turn from sin, or be left without excuse. Some men, who pretend to high degrees of spirituality, may call this carnal reasoning; and others who are enthusiastical, may deem it unnecessary; but men of sense and candor will reap the benefit.

IX. *In the composition of your sermons, think deeply on every part; and carefully weigh the whole in the balances of the sanctuary.* Extensive knowledge cannot be acquired, either in divinity or the sciences, without deep thinking. When your thoughts are superficial in the composition of sermons, you will preach superficially; but when you view your subject on every side, and enter into all its depths and heights, you are able to furnish your hearers with extensive and profound information. If you do not think closely, you cannot reason accurately; and if you cannot reason accurately, you cannot instruct your people. When you select the thoughts of other men from your books of reference, carefully examine them; and when your ideas are original, let them be examined. Bring every thought, whether borrowed or original, to the balances of the sanctuary; and rest assured, that when you think scripturally, you will be able to preach rationally. Close thinking will fix your subject in the memory, and you will be able to carry it all into the pulpit; for you cannot easily forget that in public which interested you deeply in the study. But without deep thought, your discourses will be a wild waste, and a barren wilderness.

X. *Acquire the habit of compressing your matter into a small compass, that you may be able to retain it yourselves, and that it may be easily remembered by your hearers.* There was a time when huge folios were in fashion; but times and fashions change. A few learned men who have much leisure, and a large stock of patience, wade through these ponderous volumes; but the generality of readers, in the present day, prefer works of a less bulky size, in which the widely diffused thoughts of a folio writer are compressed in a neat octavo. Caryl's Exposition of Job, in two prodigious folios, is an excellent work; but if other commentators were to follow his plan, "I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written," John xxi. 25. If you adopt a similar plan in composing sermons and in preaching, you will injure your health, and exhaust the patience of your hearers, without any good result. Our venerable Wesley said more in twenty minutes, than many say in an hour; and you should study his method, and follow his example. On this plan, there will be strength in your sermons; your congregations will never be weary of hearing you, nor will you injure your health by long and useless harangues. If you write skeletons of sermons, let them be short; for you will remember twenty or thirty lines, better than a hundred. A long outline will confuse you; but a short one will render you essential service. Good outlines are necessary, both when you preach, and when you write sermons at full length; but they should contain, in a few well-chosen words, the substance of all you intend to advance. And when the subject is well studied, and fixed in the memory, you will not often need your outline in the pulpit.

XI. *Prepare a plan of close application, that your discourse may take hold of the heart, and produce all the effects which you desire to accomplish.* Some preachers go

through their sermons a second time, by way of application; but this is an injudicious plan. The best method is, to sum up all you have said, in a few weighty propositions; and then to urge the whole, on the consciences of your audience, by ardent and affectionate exhortation. When your matter has been well prepared; when you have gained the confidence of your congregation by clear and convincing arguments; and when your own hearts are warmed with the subject, you will produce surprising effects in this part of your work. But guard against vain repetitions, and a long continued application. If you repeat what you have said before, you will disgust your hearers; and if you continue too long, you will exhaust their patience. Many preachers destroy the effect of good sermons by a crude and tedious application. The reason is obvious; they left that to circumstances of an uncertain nature, which should have been prepared in the study. If the Holy Spirit lead you out in a way which you did not intend, you must follow him, for he is "the Spirit of truth;" but use the means, and leave the event to him. It is the duty of your hearers to apply for themselves; but you must help them in this duty; and enforce the word by the most engaging method you can devise.

XII. *But when your plan is formed, and when all your materials are collected, enter on your work in humble dependence upon the Lord.* Seldom take a scrap of paper into the pulpit. It may be necessary on some occasions, and especially in the advance of life, when the memory begins to fail; but, generally, these outlines, when used in the pulpit, have a tendency to cramp and embarrass you. When the mind is brought into action, many new ideas, which never occurred before, may naturally arise out of your subject, and others may be suggested by the Holy Spirit. In these cases, be under no restraint, but give full scope to your mental powers, and follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost. But when you return to your study, write down these new ideas in their proper places, that they may be used to advantage on future occasions.

Two classes of preachers miss their way; first, those who read their sermons, and bind themselves down to their own compositions, not daring to trust in divine aid; and secondly, those who pretend to trust in the Lord, without the use of proper means. Carefully avoid these wide extremes. Study with as much care as if the whole work depended on your own exertions; but after all your exertions, trust in the Lord, and leave yourselves wholly in his hands.

VI.—ON THE CHOICE OF SUBJECTS.

BY THE REV. P. DODDRIDGE, D. D.

But before I point out what subjects are to be *preferred*, I shall show you what you are to *decline*. Among these are,

I. The doctrines of natural religion, such as the Being and Providence of God,—the state of future rewards and punishments,—liberty of choice,—the distinction between moral good and evil. These subjects are less necessary, because they are generally believed, and have been so fondly and repeatedly insisted upon by those who had but little relish for the doctrines of the gospel, that enlarging upon them would bring a man's reputation into question with many. Besides, the nicety of the arguments cannot be understood by vulgar auditors, nor is it possible that their pious affections should be much impressed by them; yet, as they are fundamentals, they ought not to be entirely omited. Let them, therefore, be touched upon in *parts* of sermons, tending to some evangelical purpose. This may be done from, "This is life eternal, to know thee," &c. "He hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light," &c. Of this method of treating such subjects, the Berry Street Lectures are excellent examples.

II. The evidences of Christianity. These are too large to be conveniently brought into a single or even a double sermon; besides, it is seldom an acceptable subject to the generality of hearers. Yet exceptions must be allowed for some places where deism prevails. Let a settled minister, in two or three elaborate sermons, give a general view of the arguments; and refer to plain treatises on the subject. It is highly proper by catechizing to inform the judgments of the rising generation on this head, as they are in the greatest danger of being seduced. When preaching on subjects that admit it, take an opportunity to make a few striking observations in con

firmation of Christianity; especially be careful to display its excellency above natural religion; this will generally be sufficient. For when our people are brought to experience the power of the gospel, they will never forsake it. It is hard for a young preacher to support his reputation by such a topic; and if he has any thing to say that is extraordinary, it will be better to say it from the press than from the pulpit.

III. The inexplicable mysteries of the gospel: such as the doctrine of the trinity,—the union of the divine and human natures in Christ,—the manner of the Spirit's operation, &c., come under this rule, for they cannot be made plain. Besides, there is danger of puzzling or inflaming our hearers; the wise will be offended to see you so forward and bold; and the hungry soul will go away from these, as from the preceding subjects, but little refreshed. It is feeding the people with bitter roots instead of fruits.

IV. The highest points of Calvinism, *supposing them to be believed:* such as the imputation of Adam's sin,—reprobation,—irresistible grace,—and others of the same cast. These doctrines may be abused, and prejudice some against the more necessary doctrines of Calvinism; as those of the mediation and atonement of Christ; the aids and influences of the Spirit, &c.—Hints on high doctrines, except on particular occasions, are better, if they are believed, than whole discourses upon them.

V. Types.—In these there is so much room for fancy, that it is difficult to speak judiciously upon them; and more difficult to please if they be not drawn to excess. But on a sacrament-day, those that are allegorized in scripture may be very profitably enlarged upon, provided the similitude and difference be shown.

VI. Particular sins—and duties.—Atterbury, indeed, says, that "general discourses are, for the most part, like large prospects, where the eye is lost in the wide compass it takes in, and sees so many things at once, that it sees nothing clearly."* To *young* preachers, however, they are not advisable. They are, indeed, much preferable to any of the former, but if frequently enlarged upon, may procure you the character of "a legal preacher;" and the same end may as well be answered another way as I shall soon show. Especially avoid preaching against a particular vice, as drunkenness, luxury, covetousness, pride, &c.; and choose rather to recommend the contrary virtues of sobriety, mortification, liberality, humility; and let these be urged chiefly by evangelical motives. A settled minister may, however, sometimes insist on such subjects, and ought to do it; particularly to caution youth, and to deter them from keeping bad company, and to induce them to observe the sabbath day strictly. Great care should be taken, however, not to draw such descriptions of bad characters as would give just occasion to suspect that you had particular persons in view. It may be added, that these subjects often lead into a chain of reasoning too close to be popular; and that people generally know right from wrong.

VII. A continued series of discourses from the same verse, or even chapter, ought to be avoided by *young* preachers. This method tends to weary an auditory. Few chapters afford proper subjects in *every* verse. The peculiar advantages of this method may be better answered by expounding; the explication and improvement of a variety of subjects, connected in some way together, making a course of sermons more entertaining.

This latter hint is chiefly intended for a *settled* minister; and it will be wisdom in him to make a proper connection between subjects, and to have, with due allowance for other occasional discourses, a series which shall contain a system of practical divinity.

VIII. Not subjects of great terror; as very strong representations of the wrath of God, or of the nature, degree, and duration of the torments of hell. To make these the subject of your sermons will be likely to bring upon you the reputation of legalists, and would perhaps rather amaze and confound the hearers for the present, than make lasting good impressions on their minds. Warn faithfully, but let it be rather in particular parts of sermons, than in distinct discourses. Always take care to avoid representing God as a tyrant.

Having shown what subjects you ought generally to decline, I will now point out what subjects are to be *preferred*, and most frequently insisted on.*

* Atterbury, Serm. vol. i. p. 38.

* "Let the most useful and pertinent subjects be

I. Those which relate immediately to Christ. The glories of his person, and riches of his grace, Psalm xlv. 2; Cant. v. 16; Isaiah ix. 6. His incarnation, 2 John i. 14. His understanding, Isaiah xlix. 5, 6; John xvii. 2. His birth, Luke ii. 11. His example, Acts x. 38; 1 Peter ii. 21. His preaching, John vii. 46. His ministerial conduct, Heb. iii. 1. His passion, Lam. i. 13; Isaiah liii. 12. His death, resurrection, and ascension, John xix. 30; Luke xxiv. 41; Acts iii. 15, 19. His intercession, Heb. vii. 25; Rom. viii. 34. His relations, offices, and characters; as husband, brother, prophet, priest, king, physician, shepherd, captain, strength, head, forerunner, advocate, friend, saviour, judge, &c.

II. The constitution of the covenant of grace made with believers in Christ. Here consider, and state the nature of justification by his righteousness; the nature of faith, and its place in the gospel scheme, also the nature, necessity, reasonableness, and effects of repentance; the freedom of the grace of God, as it is manifested in the covenant. The excellency of the gospel, the superiority of the covenant of grace, compared with former covenants, how ratified by the blood of Christ the Mediator, the seals of the covenant, the manner in which it is to be entered into, renewed, and reflected upon, &c.

III. The Spirit and his operations. Represent our absolute need of him; describe his work on the soul in conviction, conversion, and consolation; illustrate the nature of his influences; in the assistance he affords in prayer, and the witness he bears to his own work on the heart.

This is an exceedingly popular subject, and what is of still higher importance, it is a useful and scriptural one. When you enlarge upon it, however, it will be necessary to add cautions against grieving the Spirit, and directions for walking in the Spirit, and being filled with the Spirit.

IV. The privileges of the children of God; the pardon of sin, the renovation of their nature, their adoption, perseverance through divine grace, God's providential care over them, that all things are working together for their good, that they have access to God through Christ, communion with him, believing views of glory, &c. These subjects will impress the hearts of sinners, (as a lancet wounds when concealed in a sponge,) as well as raise the devout affections of true Christians.

V. General views of religion.—Mic. vi. 8; Titus ii. 11; Matt. xxii. 37. Remind hearers of the various branches of duty in a transient manner. Urge their obligation close to their consciences, for people generally know what is right, but need to be persuaded to practise it. Encourage your people to bring to you in private particular cases of conscience, that cannot be well stated in sermons.

VI. The love of Christ, and a devotional temper. Here represent his attributes, and the genuine workings of a pious soul towards him. Urge the keeping up a continual communion with him. Describe the pleasing intercourse of a devout soul with him in various ordinances. This will be particularly useful to yourselves, and very comfortable to serious Christians.

VII. The evil of sin, and the misery of sinners in consequence of it. Sound the alarm, but mingled with encouragement. Display the terrors of the law, but seldom let them be the subject of whole sermons; and generally *lament over sinners*, rather than menace or threaten them.

VIII. The temptations and exercises of a pious soul. These cases often occur among the people of God, and courses of sermons must often be interrupted to enlarge upon them. Show whence discouragements arise; describe the cause, and lay down rules for judging of sincere grace, that Christians may be comforted, and hypocrites convicted. Such sermons are generally very profitable. Fence them with several scripture quotations, that they may not be thought enthusiastic.

IX. Death, judgment, and eternity. Funeral sermons will often demand these. Nothing tends more to quicken in the duties of life, and the preparation for death. Here consider heaven in various views; conformity to God; beholding the glory of Christ; associating with saints and angels; and the influence these prospects should have upon us.

X. Examples of scripture characters, and pieces of sacred history. These are

your most frequent choice. Those are the most useful that are the most edifying; and those most pertinent that are fitted to the capacities and necessities of the auditory; to both which you ought to have a special regard."—*Barecroft's Ars Enocionandi*, p. 92.

very interesting and entertaining subjects, and will often afford you natural occasions of saying useful things in a very inoffensive way. Sometimes a virtue is better represented by such an example, than by a topical discourse; thus, submission to the will of God may be better illustrated by the example of Aaron, Eli, Job, Samuel, &c., than by general observations on the nature, advantages, and reasonableness of such a temper.

VII.—ON THE CHOICE OF TEXTS.

BY THE REV. ADAM CLARKE, LL. D.

1. NEVER take a text which you do not fully understand; and make it a point of conscience to give the literal meaning of it to the people. This is a matter of great and solemn importance. To give God's words a different meaning to what he intended to convey by them, or to put a construction upon them which we have not the fullest proof he has intended, is awful indeed! Any person who is but even a little acquainted with spiritual things, may give a spiritual interpretation, according to his own opinion, to any text; but it is not every person that can give the *literal* sense. The spiritual meaning must ever be drawn from the literal; and indeed, when the first is well known, the latter, which is its use and application, will naturally spring from it; but without all controversy, the literal meaning is that which God would have first understood. By not attending to this, heresies, false doctrines, and errors of all kinds, have been propagated and multiplied in the world.

2. Remember you are called, not only to explain the things of God, but also the words of God. The meaning of the thing is found in the word: and if the word which comprises the original idea be not properly understood, the meaning of the thing can never be defined; and on this ground the edification of the people is impossible. We often take it for granted, that the words which are in common use are well known, especially when we understand them ourselves; but this is a very false opinion, and has bad consequences; for elementary matters being not well known, it is no wonder if the intellectual improvement of the people do not keep pace with our labors. No man can read a language, the alphabet of which he has never learned. Every mathematician feels it a matter of imperious necessity to define all the terms he uses in his demonstrations.

3. Never appear to contradict the Holy Spirit by what is called treating a subject negatively and positively. I shall waive all strictures on the barbarism of "showing negatively what a thing is not," and will only beg leave to state, that the following instances of this injudicious and dangerous mode of handling the word of God have fallen within the compass of my own observation.

A preacher took for his text, Isaiah xxviii. 16, "He that believeth shall not make haste." On this he preached two sermons. His division was as follows:—"I shall first prove that he who believeth shall make haste; and secondly show, in what sense he that believeth shall not make haste." On the first, which was a flat contradiction of the text, he spent more than an hour; and the congregation were obliged to wait a whole month, before he could come back to inform them that he who believeth shall not make haste. I would not be thought to insinuate, that the first sermon was not sound doctrine and good sense as to its matter; but I say it was injudicious. And besides it was absurd to found his work upon a text, the very letter of which it contradicted in the most palpable manner.

Another, a citizen of no mean city, not a thousand miles from the place where I write, took his text from Ps. xxxiv. 19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth them out of them all." His division was as follows:—"In handling this text I shall first prove, that there is none righteous. Secondly, that the afflictions of the righteous are many: and thirdly, that the Lord delivereth them out of them all." The honest man's meaning and design were undoubtedly good; but who could hear his division, without trembling for himself and his text!

Another took Luke xii. 32, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." In opposition to the letter of his text, the preacher labored to prove, that the flock of Christ is not a little, but a very large flock; and in order to do this, brought in multitudes of pious heathens, vast numbers who

sought and found mercy in their last hour, together with myriads of infants, idiots, &c. Who does not see, that in each of the above cases, ignorance of, or inattention to, the literal meaning of the text, was the grand cause of this absurdity and contradiction. Choose, therefore, such texts as you understand; and after having conscientiously given the literal interpretation, improve the whole in the best manner you can to the edification of your hearers.

4. Seldom take a very short text; because a short one may not afford you sufficient matter to entertain and instruct your congregation. There are not many to be found who have the ability to use a few words of scripture, as Addison and Steele did the Greek and Latin mottoes of their Spectators; and those who have the ability should not use it in this way, for this plain reason, that in preaching, God should be heard more than man. But where imagination and invention are put to the rack to supply the place of the words of God, the hearers may admire the address of the preacher, but are not likely to be fed with the bread of life. In such cases man speaks most, God least. Such preaching must leave the people ignorant of the scriptures. With many at present, preaching is become more of a human art, than of a divine science; and when this is considered, we need not wonder that the pulpit is so often employed, without becoming the means of salvation to them that hear.

5. Never take a text which out of its proper connection can mean nothing. I travelled once with two preachers who trifled the whole year in this way. Their texts were continually such as these, "Adam, where art thou?" "I have somewhat to say unto thee." "If thou wilt deal justly and truly with my master, tell me." "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?" "Thy mouth is most sweet," &c. I need not add, that these solemn triflers did the people no good; and it will not surprise you to hear that they are long since both fallen away. Such texts as the foregoing may be preached from, without any study; for two reasons: first, because they are not subjects for study, and should not be studied; and secondly, because the persons who take such, speak on them whatever comes uppermost, as one explanation will suit them just as well as another; for taken out of their proper connection, they mean nothing. Beware of this, and never do violence to the word of God, by taking a text out of the connection in which his Spirit has placed it. Let God speak for himself, and his words will bear convincing testimony to their own excellence.

VIII.—ON THE DIVISION OF SERMONS

BY THE REV. E. PORTER, D. D., PRESIDENT OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, ANDOVER, U. S.

We are to consider the different kinds of method. These are the *textual*, the *topical*, and the *scholastic*.

I. The textual or verbal division is taken from the words of the text. An example of this sort we have in the exhortation of the apostle, "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance," &c.; where the preacher follows these particulars, in a separate consideration of each word, as faith, virtue, knowledge, &c.

II. The topical division drops the phraseology of the text, and is grounded on its sense as expressed in some distinct proposition. A sermon of this sort, on the text just mentioned, instead of treating five or six subjects, would illustrate perhaps this one theme, "that all the graces of the gospel are united in the character of the consistent Christian." The words of Christ to the malefactor on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," the textual preacher would divide thus:—Consider, first, the person to whom the promise was made, "Thou," the penitent thief: secondly, the matter of the promise, "shalt be with me in Paradise:" thirdly, the time of its accomplishment, "To-day." The topical preacher would perhaps divide thus:—"First, the death of believers introduces them immediately to eternal happiness: secondly, God sometimes prepares men for this happiness in the last moments of life." On such a text as this, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God;"—no better division perhaps can be adopted than that suggested by the words. But, in general, this is the favorite method of only dry and diffuse preachers.

III. The scholastic division, consisting of subject, predicate, and copula, may be more or less related to either of the preced-

ing. Suppose the text is, "He that believeth shall be saved," and the plan of discourse is to show, first, "What it is to believe; secondly, what it is to be saved; and thirdly, the certainty that all who believe shall be saved;" the method would accord with what is probably the prevailing taste of the pulpit. A sermon of an English preacher published lately, has this text, "The just shall live by faith." No thought could be more simple than the one here subjected; but the scheme of the discourse is the following:—I propose, first, to show the meaning of the term just, as used in the text: secondly, to explain the nature of faith: and thirdly, in what manner it is that the just may be said to live by faith."

Another English sermon, published on the text, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe;" has this method:—

1. What we are to understand by the name of the Lord.
2. What by its being a strong tower.
3. What is the safety it affords.
4. Who are the persons that partake of this safety.

But carry the same taste into a deliberative oration on this topic, for example, "the connection between knowledge and liberty among a people," and let the orator announce his method thus:—"I shall consider first, what we are to understand by knowledge; secondly, what by liberty; and thirdly, how the one is connected with the other;" and I need not say how tame and puerile this discourse would appear. Yet so strong is the tendency to this artificial structure, in sermonizing, that one can hardly look anywhere without finding examples of it.

It remains that I mention some rules by which divisions should be conducted. And they should be,

1. *Necessary.* The subject should not only allow, but should seem to require them. It is the province of a barren invention, as I have before remarked, to give every sermon just so many heads as to correspond with the habits of the preacher, without inquiring whether the topics to be discussed are distinct or not. And where this mechanical taste prevails, it commonly happens that the requisite number of parts is made out by forcing asunder things which really belong to the same class; or rather, by a tedious repetition of the same things under the most insipid form of variety, a mere difference of numerical distribution.

2. *Divisions should be* WELL ARRANGED. The connection between them should not only exist in the preacher's mind, but should be apparent to the hearers. The chief principles of arrangement I shall notice briefly. When the different topics will allow it, the relation of series should be observed. Each preceding particular should prepare the way for the following, and lead it in by an easy transition of thought; this principle is violated when the first head supposes the second to be already understood by the hearers. In most subjects of argument, the logical order is more or less to be observed; thus when we reason from causes to effects, or from effects to causes, or when things are stated according to order of time, an obvious relation exists, which determines the proper arrangement.

There are, indeed, some cases in which the order is nearly arbitrary. If I were discussing Christian obedience, I might say with Tillotson, that it is sincere, universal, and constant; or I might give these characteristics in a reversed order, without injuring the entire discussion; but if I were considering the fall and restoration of Peter, the two parts of the subject cannot be indifferently transposed. It would be preposterous to describe the repentance of this apostle before I had described his sin. On the same general principle, it would not be proper to mingle, in a consecutive series, things which belong to different classes. If I were proving the divine origin of the scriptures, and should take my first argument from miracles; my second, from the doctrines of the Bible; and my third from prophecy, the sources of proof would be unexceptionable, but the arrangement is unskilful, because the first and third topics belong to external, and the second to internal evidences. Nor is it proper to confound what logicians call the genus and the species. If I were illustrating the dignity of man from his faculties, it would not be proper to consider first, his reason; secondly, his will; thirdly, his soul; fourthly, his conscience; because the third comprehends all the rest. The same incongruity would be seen by a child if it were carried into geographical divisions:—as 1. Maine. 2. New Hampshire. 3. New England. 4. Massachusetts. 5. The county of Essex.

3. *Divisions should be complete.* By this I do not mean to say, as a general rule, that all the topics which appertain to a subject, should be introduced into a discourse on that subject; but that when we profess to present it as a whole, by its several parts, we should exhibit all those parts. Thus, if I were describing light by the distribution of its rays into the principal colors, I must not enumerate red, orange, yellow, green, and then stop, but must go through the seven. If I were describing Massachusetts by its counties, I must not stop after naming Suffolk, Essex, Middlesex, but must mention the whole. So, when an intelligent subject is to be treated according to properties or parts, the distribution should not be partial, but complete.

4. *Divisions should notwithstanding be few.* A man may exhibit geographical lines, mountains, rivers, cities, and a few objects of prominent importance. But attempt to make it embrace minute things, as represent private plantations and dwellings, and you frustrate its design. The eye is disgusted with this multiplicity and confusion of things; so an excessive enumeration of particulars in a sermon, distracts the minds of the hearers. A preacher of the seventeenth century having employed thirty divisions in explaining his text, says, "I shall not shred the words into unnecessary parts," and then adds fifty-six more divisions to explain the subject. Another of the same period, whose sermon had already exceeded a hundred and seventy parts, gravely apologized for omitting "sundry useful points, pitching only on that which comprehended the marrow and the substance." "When I sit under such preaching," says Dr. Watts, "I fancy myself brought into the valley of Ezekiel's vision, 'it was full of bones, and behold there were very many in the valley, and lo, they were *very dry.*'"

5. *Divisions should be* CONCISE IN TERMS. I mean that the words employed should be few; and when it is possible, the chief thought should be expressed in a single word. The reason of this rule is, that, in stating a head we simply inform our hearers what is the point to be discussed, and the more briefly and simply we do this, the more easily is our division understood and remembered. Welwood on the text, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" has this tedious round of words in his division:—

"1. The consideration of the authority of God, under which we are all equally placed, notwithstanding the variety in our conditions, ought to teach us an implicit acquiescence in the duties, and in the lot assigned us.

"2. Our obligations to cultivate the blessings we have received, and the consequences of their perversion, are exactly the same, whatever may be our portion of the advantages.

"3. The sentence which shall at last be pronounced on our conduct at the tribunal of God, will have a special relation to the advantages which have been given, or have been denied us; and to the condition in which every individual has served God, or has sinned against him."

Now if the preacher should repeat this antithetic lumber of phrases and members a thousand times, not one of his hearers would remember it. But there would have been no difficulty had he said, "I shall prove the duty of implicit acquiescence in the allotments of God; first, from his *authority* over us; secondly, from the *blessings* he confers upon us; and thirdly, from our *final account.*" As this principle is of elementary importance, and is constantly violated in the pulpit, I will add, that conciseness in the form of heads, depends on such a relation of parts as to dispense with the greatest number of words, by ellipses; and especially to dispense with all ornament or explanation in the head itself.

Take, as an illustration, the following plan on the subject of regeneration,—"First, I shall consider in what this change consists, or what is its nature. Secondly, show that wherever it takes place it is produced, not by the efficacy of means, but by the influence of the Holy Spirit. And thirdly, exhibit evidence, that wherever this change is produced by the Holy Spirit, it is followed by the fruits of holiness, or a life of obedience." See how this drapery of words is dismissed by the aid of ellipsis, suspending all the heads on one connecting term; thus, in discussing regeneration, I shall consider,—1. Its nature. 2. Its author. And 3. Its fruits.

Reybaz says, "A clear division is the handle of a vase; in the taking hold of which, every thing it contains goes with it. But if it has no handle, its contents are lost to us." Of this clear division we have an example in the six particulars of father

Bernard on the text, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout," &c. "Quis veniat? Unde? Quo? Quando? Quomodo? Adquid?" On this point I will only add two examples from a late English preacher; so brief and clear, that a hearer might repeat them mentally, several times, without losing more than one sentence of the sermon. The first on the repentance of Judas, which is shown to differ from true repentance in four respects—"Its origin, its object, its extent, and its result." The next is, "On the wrath to come," with five heads. "It is divine wrath, deserved wrath, unmingled wrath, accumulated wrath, eternal wrath."

IX.—ON THE DIVISION OF SERMONS.

BY THE REV. H. HUMPHREY, D. D., PRESIDENT OF AMHERST COLLEGE, U. S.

In giving shape and body to your preaching, you may make it either *topical*, *textual*, or *expository*; or you may, for the sake of variety, and to secure the peculiar advantages of each, sometimes construct your discourses upon one of these plans, and sometimes upon another.

A *topical* preacher chooses his text with reference to some one point, which he wishes to prove, and having derived his doctrine from it, proceeds to establish it by such arguments and illustrations as seem to him most permanent and conclusive. Edwards, Bellamy, Dwight, Smalley, Strong, and Emmons, were distinguished and powerful topical preachers. I do not mean, that all their discourses were constructed upon this plan, but that many of them were. We have an example of this in Dr. Smalley's sermon, from Eph. ii. 10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." His doctrine is, *that fallen men must be new created, before they can do any works truly good.* The plan of this discourse is exceedingly simple. I. To explain the doctrine. II. To prove it. And. III. To answer objections. Another example we find in the first volume of Dr. Emmons's sermons. Gen. xxxii. 28, "For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

DOCTRINE.

It is the design of prayer to move God to bestow mercy.

In the same volume he has a sermon from Rom. viii. 7, 8. "For the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

DOCTRINE.

The total depravity of sinners renders all their actions totally depraved.

This way of making sermons is recommended by some striking advantages. It better secures than any other the *unity* of a discourse, a capital excellence at which every preacher should aim. Every sermon ought to contain some one leading truth, to be proved, illustrated, and applied, so as to leave the most distinct and powerful impression upon the audience. And it is much easier for any man to keep to the point, after he has laid down his proposition and bound himself to sustain it, than it is under any more general statement. You will usually find, that topical sermons are clearer, more logical, better studied, and more easily remembered, than almost any that you hear. As a class, those ministers who adopt this method of sermonizing are the ablest reasoners, if they are not the most eloquent and popular preachers. Some of your most elaborate discourses, I will not undertake to say how large a proportion, but *some* of them ought to be constructed upon the topical plan. It will augment your strength and increase your usefulness.

But I must hasten to offer a few thoughts upon *textual* preaching. When a preacher selects a passage of scripture, and instead of making it the theme of some doctrinal or topical discussion, lays out his strength in explaining, opening, and applying it, his sermon is *textual*. The verse which he chooses is not the foundation merely, it is also the frame work, it is the whole superstructure, from the foundation to the top stone. A good textual discourse brings out the full meaning of the passage, and shows us how much richer it is, how much more of divine truth is wrapped up in it, than we had been wont to suppose. One of the most charming textual preachers that I ever heard, is the Rev. William Jay, of Bath, England. A volume of his sermons is now before me, and I cannot deny myself the pleasure of transcribing two or three of his plans, as among the finest specimens of textual development, as well as the most

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concise, comprehensive, and perfect skeletons, I have ever met with.

The first is from Ezek. xi. 19, 20, "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you: and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes and keep mine ordinances, and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Genuine religion, says Mr. Jay, is here developed in four essential articles. I. *Its Author.* II. *The disposition it produces.* III. *The obedience it demands.* IV. *The blessedness it ensures.* Another of his admirable plans is from Mark iv. 23, "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." We shall view these words, I. *As implying the authority of the speaker.* II. *As suggesting the importance of the subject.* III. *As appealing to impartial considerations.* IV. *As demanding practical improvement.* Another of Mr. Jay's discourses in this volume, is from Psalm lxxxiv. 11, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Let us consider what he is—*A sun and shield.* What he gives—*Grace and glory.* What he withholds—*No good thing.*

Another eminent textual preacher is the Rev. Henry Melvill, minister of Camden Chapel, London. His plans are not so neat and perspicuous as Mr. Jay's; but in bringing out the sense and marrow of scripture, he is exceedingly happy. Upon plain common texts, I do not know where I can point you to his equal. He presents almost every passage he touches in a light so original and striking, that it seems almost like a new text, and, at the same time, his thoughts and illustrations grow so naturally out of the text, that you wonder they had never occurred to you before. The style of these volumes is not exactly what I should recommend, though they contain some beautiful, and a great deal of powerful writing; but they are rich, they are sweet, they are full of the ripe clusters of Eshcol. I have said already, that I do not wish you to confine yourself exclusively to the textual method of sermonizing; but if you generally adopt it, I am persuaded you will read and study the Bible with more interest and profit to yourself, and make your discourses more strictly scriptural, as well as more instructive to your people.

It only remains, that I offer a few remarks upon *expository* preaching. This is recommended to us by the example of Christ and his apostles, as well as by that of most of the Christian fathers in the first three centuries. In looking back upon my own ministry of five and thirty years, I exceedingly regret that I did not adopt this method early, and pursue it as one of the regular exercises of the sabbath; and I think the laying aside of this kind of public instruction is one of the great defects of modern preaching. I believe but few ministers now take up any of the books, either of the Old Testament or the New, systematically in the pulpit, on the Lord's day, and before the whole congregation. There is certainly a great deal of biblical instruction in our Sabbath schools and Bible classes; and it is not uncommon, I suppose, for pastors in every part of the land to have weekly expository exercises, in their vestries and lecture-rooms. But this I conceive is not enough. It does not give the advantages of thorough doctrinal and practical exegesis, to all who need it. The whole congregation ought, as it were, to be organized into a Bible class, for a part of the year at least; that, with the sacred volume open before them, both old and young may follow the preacher from verse to verse, from paragraph to paragraph, from chapter to chapter, till the gospel, epistle, or whatever book it may be, of either Testament, is finished. This, were the exposition properly conducted, would tend to fix the attention of the whole audience; would afford abundant matter for profitable conversation in families, and in conference and neighborhood meetings; would suggest many important inquiries, which rarely occur to the mind in hearing a regular sermon, and would give the preacher opportunity to bring up every subject that the Bible touches upon, in its proper place and connection. This is an advantage which the expository method of preaching alone can secure. As we go over the scriptures in this manner, new views of truth are continually elicited, and a thousand valuable thoughts are suggested, which cannot be brought into sermons, or which, if they could, would rarely occur to the mere topical or textual preacher. Were a minister to live a hundred years, and take two new texts every Sabbath, he would be in danger of leaving out some things, after all, which the Holy

Ghost regards as important, and which would have been suggested to him in the very first year of his ministry, had he "expounded the scriptures in order" to his people.

X.—ON EXPOUNDING THE SCRIPTURES.

BY THE REV. ADAM CLARKE, LL. D.

As we nowhere find that what is called preaching on, or expounding a text, was ever in use before that period, we may thank the Babylonish captivity for producing, in the hand of Divine providence, a custom the most excellent and beneficial ever introduced among men. What the nature of preaching was at this early period of its institution, we learn from Nehemiah viii. 13, &c.

First, "They read in the book of the law of God." The words of God are the proper matter of preaching; for they contain the wisdom of the Most High, and reveal to men the things which make for their peace.

Secondly, They read "distinctly," *m'phorash*, from *parash* "to expand;" they analyzed, dilated, and expounded it at large.

Thirdly, "They gave the sense:" *v'som sekel*, "put weight to it," showed its importance and utility; thus applying verbal criticism, and general exposition, to the most important purpose.

Fourthly, they caused them to understand the reading; *vaiyabinu bammikra*, "and they understood," had a mental taste and perception of the things which were in the reading, i. e. in the letter and spirit of the text. This mode of expounding is still more necessary to us. First, because the sacred writings, as they came from God, are shut up in languages no longer vernacular. Secondly, ninety-nine out of a hundred know nothing of these languages. Thirdly, provincial customs and fashions are mentioned in these writings, which must be understood, or the force and meaning of many texts cannot be comprehended. Fourthly, sacred things are illustrated by arts and sciences, of which the mass of the people are as ignorant as they are of the original tongues. Fifthly, there is a depth in the word of God, which cannot be fathomed, except either by divine inspiration, which no idler has reason to expect; or by deep study and research, for which the majority of the people have no time. Sixthly, the people trust in general to the piety, learning, and abilities of their ministers and maintain them as persons capable of instructing them in all the deep things of God; and believing them to be holy men, they are confident they will not take their food and raiment under the pretence of doing a work, for which they have not the ordinary qualifications. You may well exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And I may with equal propriety answer, he who is taught by the Spirit of God, and neglects not to cultivate his mind in the knowledge of his divine testimonies.

XI.—ON THE ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT.

BY THE REV. J. EADES.

A VIEW of divine eloquence in general, and of the style and language most becoming the pulpit, hath already been presented; we are now, agreeably to the plan laid down, come to consider the best manner of delivering a sermon. In order to show more fully the use and importance of this part of our subject, we might here suppose a minister of Christ to have fixed upon one of the most sacred articles of religion; that he hath carefully arranged every part in the best method and order, and "sought out," like the preacher from the throne, "acceptable," nay, we will add, the most acceptable "words;" yet, after all, his discourse may be in a great measure spoiled, for want of being well delivered: with reverence we might say, this is often the case in reading the holy scriptures. What an astonishing difference is there between a person's reading a chapter, who is destitute of the powers of oratory, and neither understands nor feels what he says, and one who is possessed of this talent, and enters into the mind of God, and the spirit of his subject! This is too manifest to need any long proof.

Before we proceed any farther, it might be observed, consistent with the whole of this plan, and the mind of the greatest orators in every age, the necessity, the indispensable necessity, of understanding and entering into the spirit of our subject; of having our hearts, by reading, meditation, and prayer, like Ezra, Elihu, David, and

Paul, properly affected with the weight and importance of those spiritual and divine things, which we are about to deliver; and of the infinite worth of the souls of our hearers, which we desire to instruct or edify. The chief shepherd and bishop of souls, "he who spake as never man spake," John vii. 46, declares, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" Matt. xii. 34. Hence the propriety of a very common saying, "that which proceedeth from, is most likely to go to, the heart."

The fewer principles any art or science is reduced to, the more easily it is understood, and the longer remembered: and as the whole of what is to be offered upon the subject may be comprehended in PROPORTION, DISTINCTION, and VARIATION, according to the plan laid down, we shall now proceed, and begin with,

I. PROPORTION. By proportion is meant an answerableness, or conformity, not only in the subject of all our discourses to the oracles of God, which hath been already considered; but in the whole manner of our delivery, to the subject-matter, occasion, and design of our discourse, and the state and circumstances of our hearers.

The subject and occasion. "Every thing," saith the wisest of men, "is beautiful in its season," Eccles. iii. 11. And true wisdom, the only safe guide, and counsellor of eloquence, teacheth its possessor to discern both time and judgment. Whether it be a subject and season of mourning, and humiliation—of praise, and thanksgiving; or whatever be the occasion; a judicious minister will suit his manner accordingly: and although different kinds of eloquence will necessarily be employed in the various parts of his discourse, yet a correspondent manner will be predominant, and gain the ascendency over the rest; as far as he understands, feels, and enters into the nature, occasion, and design of his subject: like the blessed apostle, who "wept with them that wept;" or rather his divine Master, when "he beheld the city" of Jerusalem, and his whole soul burst out in the tenderest and most compassionate exclamation—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke xiii. 34, xix. 41, 42 Yes; Christ felt what he said; every word was heart-deep, every word full of sympathetic lamentation, mourning, and wo.

On the other hand; is it a time and season of praise, and thanksgiving? Agreeably to this rule, different sentiments, different affections; and, upon the whole, a different manner and kind of eloquence will naturally and necessarily prevail.

We would farther just observe on this head, that not only the subject, occasion, and design, but the circumstances of a minister's hearers, if he speaks as he ought to speak, will more or less affect his manner; for religion by no means destroys those distinctions which God hath made here in this world amongst mankind, whether in a natural, providential, spiritual, civil, or ecclesiastical respect; but it authorizes, encourages, and commands the observance of them all; and so, as far as we are under its influence, we shall be concerned, like the prophets and apostles, to address our hearers accordingly; that is to say, our superiors with reverence, our equals with familiarity, our inferiors with condescension, and all with wisdom, love, and faithfulness. But we shall not enlarge here. As the things which we have occasion to speak of, time after time, are different from each other, so proportion justly requires,

II. A DISTINCTION in the whole method, according to the difference that subsists in the subject-matter. What is to be understood by distinction, as applied to the eloquence of the pulpit, is to utter ourselves in such a manner, that all we speak may be easily heard or understood, and the whole of our discourse comprehended; according to the precept of Paul, in 1 Cor. xiv. 7, that there must be "a distinction in the sound;" and agreeable to the example of Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites, "who taught the people," and "read in the book, in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading," Neh. viii. 8, 9. It is admitted, that the inspired penmen are here declaring in what manner they read, and not in what manner they preached; yet if the truth be thoroughly examined upon this subject, it will be found that there is so near a connection between speaking well and reading well, as to authorize the propriety of our application of this part of the divine word to the subject we are considering.

A person who reads well, as far as he understands and enters into the spirit of the author, utters himself with all that freedom, ease, and energy, as if he had been speaking the more immediate sentiments and affections of his own mind upon the subject: on the other hand, as far as he speaks well, he delivers himself with equal propriety, as well as force and energy, with the best of readers.

The question that naturally presents itself on this head is, By what means may a minister of Christ most effectually attain this important part of eloquence? We answer, to begin at the foundation of all, as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, are the basis of arithmetic, so the common rules, proposed by almost every writer upon the subject of rhetoric, seem to lay a solid foundation for all eloquence, as well as the whole excellence of delivery. And as letters, syllables, words, and sentences, comprehend the whole of our discourses, as it respects the language of art; we shall just mention a few rules, and make some observations thereon, chiefly as they relate to distinction; we mean—the pitch or key of the voice—pronunciation—articulation—accent—emphasis—cadence—and pauses.

1. *Pitch or key.* If we mean to speak well, we must have a due regard to the pitch or key of our voice, so as to be heard without any difficulty; and at the same time to be able to rise or fall higher or lower with equal ease, according to our subject. If we pitch too high, we lose the reins and government of our voice, and that variety which is essential to harmony. If we pitch too low, we shall not be heard, and then our auditors will lose part of the subject: the medium is best in general: but the place we speak in, the distance of our hearers, and the powers of voice which we possess, must determine this.

2. *Pronunciation*, or the manner of sounding our words. Although we are not required, like the Ephraimites, to pronounce the word *shibboleth*, at the peril of our lives, it is nevertheless of importance, if we mean to speak well, and would not at least divert the attention of our hearers from the things we speak, to call them by true and proper names; we mean such as are established by the practice of the most learned and eloquent of mankind. This is in some places difficult to attain; however, we may find it worth our notice to draw up a catalogue of all the words which we may have occasion to pronounce, especially those in scripture, and so have recourse to the best pronouncing dictionaries, if we should not have an opportunity to hear them spoken by those who are acquainted with the best manner of sounding the same.

3. *Articulation.* In our articulation, in order to guard against the extremes of being too swift or too slow, we should carefully distinguish the syllables from one another, by a due proportion of sound in the utterance. The best cure for a voice that is too swift, hasty, and precipitate, consists in a close attention to the nature, weight, and importance of the subject, especially when we are speaking of the most solemn things. The best cure for a lifeless and tiresome utterance and pronunciation, is a close application to the zeal and activity of God: we speak here only in general; what we say must direct us in this, as well as in every other part of eloquence; for sometimes such is the nature of the subject, that it is difficult for some to speak too fast; at other times for others to speak too slow.

4. *Accent.* Here we shall not enlarge, but be a little more particular, just in hinting a few things concerning its nature, use, and the most effectual means of acquiring proper accent.

(1.) As to its nature. It is well known that we understand by it, that syllable in a word on which the speaker dwells longer than on any other.

(2.) As to its use. This doth not respect the change of notes, as higher or lower; but settles the due measure, proportion, and variation of time in the delivery. This proportion, as longer or shorter, arises from the place of its seat, whether on the vowel or consonant. It is accent that distinguishes words from mere syllables; and unites the syllables which are in the same together, and renders a discourse more harmonious. If we read or speak without any accent, we lose all the propriety and beauty of the sentence; nothing is left but mere sound; and if we had not known the sense of it before, we should never know it by such an unmeaning way; or if we place the accent wrong, it is easy to perceive the want of harmony.

(3.) As to means. Writers upon the subject propose the following rules:—one is, whenever the accent is on the consonant,

the vowel has a short sound; the other is, that no vowel ever hath a long sound in an unaccented syllable; and they tell us that if this were properly adjusted, it would prove a master-key to the pronunciation of our whole tongue; and therefore in our public ministrations we should lay the same sort of accent on our words as in common discourse; but where doubt arises, we may consult the ear.

5. *Emphasis.* This serves to mark and distinguish both the sense and strength of the expression, or the meaning and force of what is said. A right emphasis in speaking greatly depends upon rightly understanding the subject; and, by the use of proper emphasis, our hearers are assisted in comprehending and feeling the same; without it we are likely either to leave them in the dark, or lead them astray from the sense and spirit of our discourse. We shall therefore give an example or two of the utility, necessity, and importance of just emphasis from the holy scriptures; both as it relates to the understanding and the affections.

1. As it respects the understanding, sense, and meaning of our subject. "We are also his offspring," saith Paul, Acts xvii. 28. Here, although the principal emphasis, according to the connection, seems to be upon the word *his*, i. e. "We are the offspring of God," yet, without the least injury to the sense, we may consider every word as emphatical: for instance, if the emphasis be placed upon the word *we*, it points out *who* the persons are which are called "the offspring of God;" if it be laid on the word *are*, it positively asserts the truth of the expression; if it be placed on the word *also*, it implieth that we are not the *only* persons, but we express our claims as well as others; if it is on the word *his* it points us to our Creator; and if on the word *offspring*, we are led from plain to figurative language; and by a beautiful trope derived from a tree or a fountain, to consider our relation to, and dependence upon God for every blessing; as the branches depend upon the root, or waters flow from the fountain.

2. An example of emphatical language, addressed not only to the reason and understanding, but more especially to the affections, may be taken from the question which our blessed Lord once put to his disciples, when many who followed him before forsook him, "Will *ye* also go away," saith Christ, John vi. 67. Every word in this sentence is emphatical; but the word *ye* seems the principal. If we lay the chief emphasis on the word *will*, we derive this sense—are you come to a point about the matter? Is your heart determined to "follow a multitude to do evil?" If on the word *ye*, it is as much as though he had said *ye*, my disciples, whom I have taken under my wing; whom I have taught and instructed in the way of life and salvation; consider the profession that you have made; your character, your dependence upon your Master; the obligations you lie under; the expectations you have from me. If on the word *also*, the sense is this—if others, who are utterly unacquainted with the nature and design of my coming into the world; strangers to my doctrine, and its glorious tendency—if they forsake me; consider that you have "put your hand to the plough," will you look back? Such are not "fit for the kingdom of God." And if we place the emphasis on the words *go away*, fresh matter immediately opens, which is of the greatest concern and importance—Will you leave your Master? Are you willing to relinquish all claim to my care, love, tenderness, protection, and salvation? What iniquity have you found in me? Have I ever disappointed your just and reasonable hopes? Have I ever been a barren wilderness to *you*, my disciples? Can you find a better master? Will your adversary the devil, the world, or sin, promise and perform what I make over to you in the New Testament? What can earth, what can heaven itself do for you? "If you draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in you:" and can you bear my departure from you? Can you bear to hear me pronounce the tremendous sentence in "the judgment of the great day,"—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire?"

But it is not here intended to enter at large into the sense and spirit of this tender and affecting passage; it is hoped that the little which hath been said already, is not only consistent with the chief design of Christ in the before-mentioned important question, and speaks the fulness and variety of matter contained therein, but that it showeth, in some measure, the utility, necessity, beauty, and importance of just and proper emphasis. We say, with the design of Christ, (for it is this that points out the emphasis,) and a knowledge of the chie

design naturally leads into the understanding of all those words which are most emphatical; hence when a man reads or speaks what he understands and feels, and enters into its design, we have, for the most part, just and proper emphasis.

3. Another example and specimen of emphatical language, as addressed peculiarly to the affections, may be selected from the last words of the great apostle's justly admired, excellent, and eloquent speech before king Agrippa, which is recorded in Acts xxvi. 29, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether as I am, except these bonds." Let it be here supposed, if possible, for a man to read or repeat these words without any emphasis;—and indeed it is not only possible, but probable, and very certain, that if a person does not understand, and enter into the apostle's spirit, he may divest it of all its beauty and energy, were he to pronounce the same as we would sound the letters in the alphabet. Where is that heavenly solemnity, "I would to God?" Where is that noble generosity? Where is that diffusive benevolence, forgiveness, love, and tenderness of heart, towards his enemies contained in these words, "Not only thou, but also all that hear me this day?" Where is that strong, expressive, weighty, affectionate, and affecting manner that runs through the whole? Where is that Christ-like tenderness, may it not be said, politeness and heavenly ingenuousness, which appears in the last clause of the sentence, "Except these bonds?" It is all vanished—lost—gone.

On the other hand, let us realize the apostle's words, enter into their sense and spirit, and show in what manner it is most probable he delivered himself, "I would to God." May it not here be imagined that the blessed apostle was overawed—not particularly by the sight and presence of king Agrippa, though doubtless he paid him all the honor that was due, but by the divine Majesty, the King of kings—with his eyes devoutly lifted up to heaven, his hand upon his heart, and then affectionately cast upon Agrippa, with his right hand taken off from his bosom, and pointed towards him, when he pronounced the word *thou?* And is it not natural to suppose that the apostle looked with that "charity that suffereth long, beareth all things, endureth all things," upon his hearers; that when he came to the word *all*, he laid a particular stress upon it? And that when he pronounced the word *altogether*, he spoke it with great and ardent desire? That when he came to the words "such as I am," he gave an emphasis expressive of the deepest humility, upon the account of what he once was; and the most lively gratitude for the glorious change and revolution which had taken place in himself, in the church, and in the world; which his eyes had seen, his ears heard, and his heart conceived, would continue even to the end of time? And that he also gently laid his right hand again upon his breast, and then, with tenderness and affection, both hands and eyes pointing to his chains, said, "Except these bonds?" What a kind, tender-hearted exception is this! Here savages in human shape may learn humanity; hither clowns may resort, and learn true politeness; and the most narrow-contracted souls have their hearts enlarged with the godlike sentiments of true, real, and genuine Christianity. Every part is exquisitely, delicately, admirably, and peculiarly adapted to make the strongest impression upon the hearers. It is as much as though Paul had said, King Agrippa, I sincerely appeal to the heart-searching God, that I long for thy temporal, spiritual, and eternal happiness; my heart is enlarged towards my fellow-creatures; my heart's desire and prayer to God for my persecuting brethren, as well as all the Jews, is, that they might be saved; nor do I wish them to be partakers of the cup that my heavenly Father, in conformity to my divine Lord, hath put into my hands; I am resigned to it for myself; I am his follower: "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day;" I expect to be in heaven soon; I anticipate the glories above; I wish you in the same state; I wish you the same experience; but, Agrippa, I do not wish to see you a prisoner at the bar, as I am; I do not wish you to be in chains, as I am; so far am I from envying your life, liberty, and happiness, that I wish you all "the glorious liberty of the children of God;" I wish to see you free from the dominion of sin, Satan, and the world; I wish you a happy deliverance from a more dreadful curse than my enemies have bound themselves under, "that they would neither eat nor drink," till they had imbrued their

hands in my blood; I wish you a happy and an everlasting deliverance from the tremendous curse of that law, which denounces eternal death upon all who are under it, and do not "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." In a few words, it is as though the apostle had said, "I wish you liberty both in soul and body; I wish you all the pleasures, but none of the pains; all the comforts, but none of the afflictions; all the joys, but none of the sorrows; all the happiness, but none of the misery: I not only wish that you may never "suffer as an evildoer," but that you may never suffer for the gospel; I wish you "altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

Sometimes the last word in the sentence is most considerable, and requires to be pronounced in the most emphatical manner; as, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord," 2 Cor. iv. 5. Here, according to the antithesis, the words, "but Christ Jesus the Lord," are necessarily most emphatical. If we go on to the 18th verse of the same chapter, the voice must naturally be raised; and the infinite importance of invisible realities demands the most weighty and serious manner in the delivery of the last word—eternal.

6. *Cadence.* We promised to say a little upon this part of eloquence—the proper falling of the voice. All the parts of eloquence jointly contribute among themselves, and unite together, in order to promote the perfection of the whole; and, as the whole is ordained, and should be dedicated to the honor of Christ and the edification of his church, it naturally and necessarily follows, that we should never lose sight of this great end.

Sometimes the sense and spirit of what we speak demand a more quick and sudden close; at other times, a more easy, gradual, and deliberate cadence—how low the voice should drop in every sentence, or part of a sentence, keeping what we said before in our view, is best determined by the rules of harmony. Harmony consists in a proportionable distinction and variation in the whole manner of delivery; but not to enlarge here, there is one thing above all others that we would earnestly press upon this article—as the congregation cannot be edified by what they cannot hear, or supply from other parts which they have heard, however interesting the things we speak may be, it is reasonable to conclude, that we should especially endeavor, even though it be at the expense of harmony, to support our voice from sinking too low for the people, and keep it up so high as to be distinctly heard.

7. *Pauses.* We are now come to the last of those important parts of eloquence which we intended to speak of under the head of distinction, i. e. pauses. What may justly be said of tropes and figures in language, is equally applicable to pauses in delivery. They are both essential and ornamental; essential not only to the preacher, but the hearers. As to the preacher, their use is certainly indispensable. The heavenly bodies may incessantly perform their respective revolutions; the earth may continue her motions until time itself shall be no longer; but such is the state and constitution of its inhabitants, that they stand in absolute need of repose time after time. The weary traveller wants rest, to restore his strength and refresh his spirits, in order to hold out to the end of his journey; so doth the preacher, to recover his voice and relieve his lungs. But this is not the only reason; without proper pauses, the hearers are often left in uncertainty, darkness, and confusion, so that they can neither understand the sense, nor enter into the spirit of the subject. For example, as to the sense and meaning of what we say; let us only for a few moments suppose a person to utter these words of Christ—"What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" Matt. xi. 7; Luke vii. 24. If they be read as a question and answer, which is evidently, according to the preceding context, opposite to the mind of our Lord, it is as much as though our Redeemer meant to signify, that John was not worth attention; that he was a fickle, unstable, inconsistent preacher, "carried about with every wind of doctrine." Whereas, if we consider the passage as two questions, as it really is, the sense clearly appears to be—a strong assertion to the contrary; that John was a person of quite a different character; that he stood firm and immoveable, as "an iron pillar, or brazen walls;" that the doctrines he preached were "not yea and nay, but yea and amen." But we must not enlarge.

We observed, that proper pauses were not only essential, but ornamental. As rest to a laboring man is sweet as well as

necessary, so there is a real sweetness, beauty, and energy in this silent eloquence, which is often more affecting than words, especially when a minister is going to deliver any of the most weighty, momentous, and important expressions; a solemn pause before, and sometimes another after it, hath a surprising tendency to engage the attention, to prepare the hearer's mind for its reception, and afford some time for serious meditation.

We have already mentioned, that the nature and importance of our discourse must govern every part of eloquence, and, consequently, all the pauses. These are more immediately directed by the emphasis, and the notes and tones of our voice in the cadence. By these means, we point out when the sense is only suspended, or when it is entirely finished. The ear expects, and hath a right to expect, such and only such stops and pauses as are agreeable to the sense we utter, or the affections we express; otherwise we disappoint and disoblige the critical judge. But as those notes and tones, as well as the conceptions and affections which should govern them, are almost innumerable, we shall not here attempt to enlarge, but proceed to the last part of eloquence, which was proposed to be considered under the head of,

III. VARIATION. In order to speak well, we must vary the whole of our manner agreeably to the different subjects which we handle, the various parts of our discourse, and the different affections which naturally arise from them.

1. As to the *subjects and their compositions*—this hath been already spoken of.

2. With regard to the *various parts of our discourse*—we shall only just drop a few hints at present. Let it be supposed, that the subject-matter of the discourse, from the beginning to the end, rises in its weight and importance; this climax in matter and method will naturally require the same in the whole of our manner. Suppose a cloud to surround the subject when the preacher enters into it; now, as the sun in the heavens, by degrees rising higher and higher, scatters the darkness, dispels the gloom, and warms and enlivens the world with its vital influence, so let the preacher increase in light, heat, energy, and majesty, till he comes to the application; and there especially glow, melt, and burn with the most intense zeal, sacred ardor, and heavenly vehemence, so as to possess and fill the souls of his hearers with the deepest and most affecting sense and impression of the infinite importance, excellency, and dignity of his subject.

This gradual method here is most natural and reasonable, and bids fairest, especially if the mind is kept in suspense, and not disappointed, to constrain the attention to the last. But then it must be supposed (as was before observed) that the matter from the beginning to the end rises in its weight and importance, otherwise this manner is both unnatural and improper.

3. With respect to the different *affections* of our minds. In order to set this point in as clear a light as possible, we shall consider the following things:—

(1.) What is here to be understood by affections, and the affections themselves.

(2.) Endeavor to make it clear and evident, that religion and Christianity, above all other things, are adapted to raise the affections of the soul to the highest pitch and tone—to afford the most rational and sublime entertainment—and the best, noblest work and employment for men and angels to all eternity.

(3.) The way and manner of expressing the affections on the delivery of a sermon.

(1.) What is to be here understood by affections. By affections are meant all those inward motions of our nature, which are excited by the various objects we are conversant with, according to the light in which they are viewed, and appear to the mind. Here, if ever, we must make a solemn pause—appeal to the mind; for it is of infinite importance that we do not (especially in religion, and things which belong to salvation) mistake appearances for realities; i. e. that we do not take "darkness for light, and light for darkness; call evil good, and good evil; put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." Hence arises the necessity of knowing "the things which belong unto our peace;" of having our understandings divinely enlightened, to behold the wonders contained in the law of God; that our spiritual eye may properly affect our hearts; and truth in its power brighten on the soul. Happy preacher, when this is the case! happy frame! now he presents such, and only such objects, as are proper to excite those affections in his hearers which are just and reasonable, suited to their several conditions, and

worthy an immortal soul; such as may be raised and exercised with the greatest safety, even in the highest degree.

This brings us to consider the affections themselves. These are such as were felt, most deeply felt, and powerfully expressed, not only by the apostles and prophets, but by their divine Master in his sermons and discourses. We shall speak of these affections under the characters of love, hatred, hope, fear, joy, and sorrow; together with all those mixed affections, such as compassion, admiration, zeal, and reverential awe.

Now, who can read the following passages without being abundantly satisfied of this great truth, (let it be remembered, that we are treating here of the affections of Christ chiefly as a preacher:)—"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink," John vii. 37. Who can help discovering here the zeal of his heavenly Father's house that ate him up—the strong affections of love, pity, friendship, and benevolence, which filled and fired his great, generous, and tender soul! We are told, in Mark iii. 5, that Christ looked round about on the scribes and Pharisees "with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts;" with anger at their sins—with sorrow for the dreadful consequence. In another place, the same evangelist tells us, "He sighed deeply in his spirit," Mark viii. 12.

But of all other affections, compassion appears most prevalent in the heart of Christ. He was not only now and then grieved and sorry for the sins and miseries of mankind, but, as the prophet expresses it, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," Isaiah liii. 3; one who seemed to be composed of grief and sorrow.

When the blessed Jesus cast his eyes upon the multitude, "he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted." This compassion was the moving cause of all that he did and suffered in our room and stead as God-Man-Mediator, and of all his thoughts, words, and actions, as a minister. Who can help being moved to see him, who had at all times the most perfect government of his affections, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities?" The Rock of Ages moved! Yes; our great High Priest had "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that were out of the way," Matt. ix. 36; Heb. v. 2.

At another time we are told, that "Jesus rejoiced in spirit," Luke x. 21. But what love and affection may we suppose filled his soul, when he pronounced that heavenly salutation in meeting his disciples, "All hail!" Matt. xxviii. 9.

Of all the preachers in the world, the apostle Paul seemed to come the nearest to his divine Master in affection in general; but in this affection in particular, what can be more solemn and more pathetical than his appeal to God in behalf of the Philippian church—"God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 8. Hence it is recorded, in 2 Cor. xi. 29, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" His heaven-enlarged heart appeared to be in unison with Christ and all his church; and his soul seemed to be made up of sympathy, like Jeremiah, "For the hurt of the daughter of God's people he was hurt." He rejoiced with them that rejoiced, and mourned with them that mourned.

But we intend more fully to explain all these affections, and at the same time trace them, as so many streams, to their fountain-head. This is comprehended in one word—love. Love, if we may be allowed the figure, is the main-spring of the soul, which sets all the others in motion. For instance, is the object which we are conversant with good, amiable, beautiful? It excites love. Doth an object of a contrary nature, evil, ugly, deformed, present itself, so as to hinder our enjoyment of the same? Out of this very affection arises hatred. Do we discover a prospect of being delivered from evil, and enjoying the good which our hearts are fixed upon? Out of this love arises hope. Doth the prospect vanish, or are we in danger of losing what we enjoy, or of coming short of what we expect? Our hopes give up the ghost; fear, like an armed man, taketh possession of the soul. Have we, on the other hand, a full assurance, or are we in the possession of the object we love? The affection we feel is joy. Have we actually lost the good we possessed? Are we apprehensive of losing it? Or is evil present? Sorrow fills our hearts. Do we realize human misery? Love unites with sorrow, and becomes compassion. Is the object which we are conversant with great and wonderful? It excites admiration. Do we consider this ob-

ject as neglected, slighted, insulted, dishonored? This kindles all the fire, and inflames the whole soul with zeal.

(2.) We shall endeavor to show that religion and Christianity, above all other things, are adapted to raise the affections of the soul to the highest pitch and tone; to afford the most rational and sublime entertainment; and the best, noblest work and employment for men and angels to all eternity. For instance,

1. As to love and esteem. What object is there in heaven or earth so adapted, so peculiarly adapted to excite and raise these affections to the highest degree, as the infinite beauty, goodness, and amiableness of him who is "the desire of all nations"—the beloved of the Father—the worship of angels—"the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely?"

2. Do we admire, justly admire, things which are great, vast, sublime, and wonderful? What in time, or to all eternity, can possibly be compared with the great "Mystery of godliness?" Ask the three highly-favored apostles, who "were with him in the holy mount," and "eye-witnesses of his majesty." Ask the "innumerable company of angels," and "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven."

3. Is the absence of good, and presence of evil, attended with grief? Should not the loss of the divine image, which our souls have suffered; should not the absence of him, whose "loving-kindness is better than life"—"in whose presence is fulness of joy"—and at whose "right-hand are pleasures for evermore;" and the presence of sin, our greatest enemy; sin, the greatest evil; sin, the only cause of all other temporal, spiritual, and eternal evils, fill us with the most pungent, deepest sorrow?

4. Have we any "bowels of compassion?" What should move them like to human misery? A sinful world is a miserable world; and can we cast our eyes around us, in any corner of the globe, or turn them inward upon ourselves, and not find sufficient matter to touch and draw forth this tender affection of the soul in the highest degree?

5. Does an assurance, or the actual possession of any good, excite joy? The full assurance, the actual possession of Christ in our hearts by faith, must excite "joy unspeakable."

6. Do we hate things which are ugly, odious, and deformed? What is there in the whole universe—what can be found in earth or hell so ugly, odious, and deformed, as the detestable, execrable cause of all deformity in the whole creation? as the abominable thing which God's soul loathes; which hath turned angels into devils, and exposed mankind to the hatred and displeasure of him whose majesty and excellence, glory and beauty, overawes and captivates the saint and the seraph, and who will remain love itself, and infinitely lovely, to eternity?

7. Say—does not this afford the strongest reason for a sacred zeal for his glory and our everlasting enjoyment? Is the chief, the supreme Good—is the infinite, the eternal Fair neglected, slighted, insulted, dishonored? and should we not, like the burning seraphim, kindle into a holy flame, which hath the most vehement heat? Should we not maintain a zeal in proportion to his infinite greatness and excellencies, the injury that our sins have done him, and the invaluable worth of our own and others' immortal souls?

8. Can any thing enliven our hope like the promises, the "exceeding great and precious promises," of a "God that cannot lie?" the promise of Christ, heaven, and a world of eternal glory. Or,

9. Can any thing awaken, rouse, and alarm our fear, like the terrors of death, judgment, and eternal misery?

(3.) We shall now endeavor to point out the best manner of expressing the affections in the delivery of a sermon, in tones, looks, and gestures, so as properly to affect the hearts of all our hearers.

In order to set this in the clearest point of light, we shall here suppose the divine orator to have entered the pulpit, and just about to engage in his work; that he hath chosen a subject of the greatest importance, even the recovery of mankind by Jesus Christ—this, above all others, is particularly adapted to touch the inmost springs of the soul. The matter is divine love—the whole of his discourse made up of love. He understands, and hath drunk deep himself into the spirit of his text. Like Elihu and Paul, the spirit within, "the love of Christ, constraineth him." Nor is any affection here so just and reasonable as love—love, all inflamed, drawn forth, and exercised in the highest degree! But in what manner

doth he express it? Methinks I see him stand in the sacred place; he casts his eyes respectfully around the congregation; I read the spirit of his subject in his countenance; I behold one of the burning seraphim cheerfully hastening his flight from the altar of atonement, "having a live coal in his hand," and touching his lips; I listen; I hear him summon up all the daughters of music; his "tongue is the pen of a ready writer;" his accents are soft, sweet, melodious, pleasant, and delightful, as the sound of the jubilee, or the song of angels. Now he dwells upon his adorable person, and talks about the riches, "the unsearchable riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honor of his excellent majesty."

Admiration. A sacred admiration overspreads and covers him; the whole man is expanded, enlarged, enraptured, for such is the effect of the glorious subject upon his heaven-won soul; every word, every look, every motion, speak the language of wonder, love, and esteem; he strives to praise the Lord "according to his excellent greatness," and would fain move heaven and earth with his subject. But here he feels, deeply feels, that his highest notes can never reach the infinite dignity of him, "who is exalted above all blessing and praise;" the sense, the realizing sense of this fills him with

A reverential awe. Here, like Moses, when "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the burning, unconsuming bush;" or, as Joshua and Isaiah, when they saw the same adorable personage, his soul feels the deep impression; his whole man is overawed, as "Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle;" the slow solemn utterance—the unvarying tones of voice—the composed gesture and action—even the profound pause and silence—every thing about him strongly marks and expresses something like what the patriarch declared, "How awful is this place! Surely, this is none other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven," Gen. xxviii. 17. Under the influence of the same devout and Christ-like temper, he realizes the sinful and miserable state and condition of those whose minds are blinded by the god of this world; who see "no form nor comeliness in the Saviour, that they should desire him." Here indignation, for he cannot bear to see the object of his love neglected, slighted, and dishonored—here a holy indignation against sin,

A sacred zeal for the glory of his Lord, and their salvation, burns with a most vehement heat. He cries aloud, and spares not; he shows God's people "their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." Here he is in reality a Boanerges. I feel the fiery sparkling eye; his terrific accents sound terrible as the roaring of a lion, the thundering of Sinai, or the more dreadful clangor of the last trumpet. Now he lays to heart the danger that his hearers are in of being lost eternally.

Fear. A sympathetic fear and dread possess all his powers. Unable to support himself, he shuddering starts from the tremendous thought. The pallid countenance—the sickened eye—the opened, uplifted, shrinking hand—the weak, dejected, hesitating accents, which quiver and tremble upon his faltering tongue—all speak the deep and inward commotion of his soul.

But doth he discover any concern in his hearers for the one thing needful? Are they inquiring for "the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward?" Are they in the case of the poor condemned publican, or the convinced trembling jailer? This inspires him with hope on their account; his soul enters the heaven of heavens; ranges the eternal world, and realizes those things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"—and he comes back full of immortality! And oh, with what ardor doth he grasp the longed-for moment! With what animated strains of celestial eloquence doth he address his auditory! How cheerfully doth he present Christ, heaven, and a world of glory, to their view! The ready, quick, rapid, lively accents; the brightened, intense, smiling countenance; the wishful, affectionate eye, pointing to the place where the soul's anchor is cast; seem to anticipate the blessedness that awaits the redeemed, who shall "come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy upon their heads;" Isaiah li. 11, xxxv. 10.

Joy. Oh! with what pleasure and delight doth he congratulate the Redeemer, and all his redeemed. Yes; he rejoices with the chief shepherd and bishop of souls over his returning sheep—with the father of the prodigal, and his returning son. He

interests heaven and earth in his subject, and calls upon both to unite in his song. The language of his soul is, "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel," Isaiah xliv. 23. Here, as when "the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubim, came into the camp," 1 Sam. iv. 4, 5; or, as when "the foundation of the temple was laid," Ezra iii. 10–13; or, as when Solomon was anointed king, 1 Kings i. 39, 40;—here the clear, full, flowing, pleasant, sweet, and delightful voice of melody resounds; but soon, ah! too soon, his joy is darkened; his joy is turned into

Sorrow. His hearers are sinners; and it is much to be feared, that some of them are living and dying in their sins; and that others are oppressed, distressed, afflicted, and deserted, which makes his soul to melt into

Pity and Compassion. His bowels yearn over his hearers, like him who was "a man of sorrows," when he beheld the city of Jerusalem; if he speaks at all with his voice, for his heart and his tongue are often as it were both in his eyes, it is rather in low, flexible, interrupted, languid accents; the mournful, dove-like sweetness and cloudiness of voice, of all others the most tender and affecting, enters the inmost feelings of their hearts.

Gesture. *The Head and Countenance.* Authors upon this subject have very minutely and particularly described this part of eloquence; we mean the various motions, looks, and gestures, arising from every affection, as well as the tones of voice, in which they naturally express themselves.

A thorough understanding of our subject —a due impression of its weight and importance upon our own hearts—a strict guard against every thing formal and affected—a close observation of the best speakers, and a just adoption of what is most becoming us in their manner, with constant practice, will be our best guides and instructors. We shall therefore only just drop a few hints.

The *Face* may with great propriety be compared to a mirror, in which we may behold the various passions of the mind, as love, hatred, hope, fear, joy, sorrow, zeal, admiration, and compassion. Agreeable to this, we read, in Neh. ii. 2; Eccles. vii. 3, of a sad countenance—in Ezek. xxvii. 35, of a troubled countenance—in Prov. xxv. 23, of "an angry countenance"—and in Prov. xv. 13, of "a cheerful countenance;" and if the heart is deeply affected, it must more or less appear in the looks and gesture, as well as voice of the preacher. It is impossible to realize "the things which belong unto our peace;" to speak of death, judgment, heaven, hell, and eternity, with all its tremendous miseries and horrors, on the one hand; and its glories, pleasures, and happiness on the other, properly in the same manner. No, like Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, our countenance will change, Dan. vii. 28, iii. 19. Love naturally wears a comely and pleasing countenance; hatred a forbidding, frowning, angry countenance; hope, a brightened, intense, smiling countenance; fear, a pallid countenance; joy, a cheerful countenance; and sorrow, a sad countenance.

Our *Eyes*, as a window to the heart, will serve to discover what is within; grief will cast a cloud upon them, and often fill them with tears; joy, like the sun in the heavens, dispels the gloom, and brightens the eyes.

Voice. The scriptures mention a variety of kinds of voices; as a distinct voice, Neh. viii. 8; "a pleasant, sweet, melodious voice," Ezek. xxxiii. 32; Cant. ii. 14; Isaiah li. 3; a fluent voice, or a tongue as "the pen of a ready writer," Psalm xlv. 1; and of a loud strong voice, Isaiah xl. 9, lviii. 1. We also read of "the voice of weeping," crying, and lamentation, of thanksgiving, joy, and triumph, and of the voice of salvation, Isaiah lxv. 19; Psalm xxvi. 7; Job iii. 7; Jer. vii. 34; Psalm xlvii. 1, cxviii. 15.

From the places already referred to, it clearly appears just and consistent with scripture, as well as reason, to vary our voice, countenance, and gesture, according to our subject; and this will unavoidably be the case, as far as we understand and feel its weight, where there is no impediment in the organ of speech, if we speak naturally; for as there is certainly a wide difference between the various objects which are presented to our minds; so they affect, and ought to affect our hearts more or less in proportion to their nature and importance, and our own concerns with

them; as true or false, great or little, good or evil; with love or hatred, hope or fear, joy or sorrow. As the language of all these affections is different, so the voice, looks, and gesture, if natural, must be different; and will be expressive of the sentiments and feelings of our hearts, as they arise from the subject. This manner of delivery must, more or less, interest and affect our auditory, in proportion to their understanding, imagination, sensibility, or affections.

In a word, herein consists all the life, power, soul, and spirit of eloquence,—to understand our subject thoroughly, to be fully convinced of its truth and reality, suitably affected with its weight and importance, and deliver ourselves accordingly. This is the best way, as far as it respects eloquence, to instruct, convince, and edify—in short, to please, delight, astonish, conquer, subdue, reign, and triumph over the hearts and affections of all.

XII. ON ELOCUTION, OR PRONUNCIATION.

BY THE REV. J. MASON, M. A., FORMERLY OF CHESHUNT.

Elocution is a branch of oratory, the power and importance of which is greater than is generally thought; insomuch that eloquence takes its name from it.

It was much cultivated by Quintilian, and before him by Cicero, and before him by M. Antonius; but before his time, it was too much neglected by the Roman orators, which made him say, he had seen many men famous for eloquence, but not one of them that understood elocution.

But what stress was laid upon it by the Greek orators, appears from that celebrated saying of Demosthenes; who being asked, what was the first principal thing in oratory? answered, Pronunciation; being asked again what was the second? replied, Pronunciation. And what was the third? Pronunciation. Denoting that in his judgment the whole art, spirit, and power of oratory consisted in this.

Cicero, and after him Quintilian, divided oratory into five parts: 1. Invention; by which we provide ourselves with suitable and sufficient materials for a discourse. 2. Disposition; by which they meant the division of their subject into parts and sentences, according to the most natural order; and consequently the proper distribution and arrangement of their ideas. 3. Elocution; by which they always meant, what we call, diction; which consists in suiting our words to our ideas, and the style to the subject. 4. Memory, or a faculty of clearly discerning and retaining our ideas, and of calling to mind the properest words by which to express them. 5. Pronunciation; or the art of managing the voice and gesture in speaking.

So that by pronunciation, the ancients understood both elocution and action; and comprehended in it the right management of the voice, looks, and gesture. To the former of these the present essay is chiefly confined; viz., the right management of the voice in reading or speaking; which is indifferently called by us, elocution and pronunciation.

The great design and end of a good pronunciation is, to make the ideas seem to come from the heart; and then they will not fail to excite the attention and affections of them that hear us; from which the great benefit and usefulness of this too much neglected art may be seen.

The design of this essay is to show,

I. What a bad pronunciation is, and how to avoid it.

II. What a good pronunciation is, and how to attain it.

I. What a bad pronunciation is, and how to avoid it.

1. *What a bad pronunciation is.*

Now the several faults of pronunciation are these following.

1. When the voice is too loud. This is very disagreeable to the hearers, and very inconvenient to the speaker. It will be very disagreeable to the hearers, if they be persons of good taste, who will always look upon it to be the effect either of ignorance or affectation. Some will impute it to your ignorance, and suppose that you were never instructed better since you left the reading-school; where children generally get a habit of reading in a high-pitched key, or a uniform elevated voice, without any regard to emphasis, cadence, or a graceful elocution. Others will impute it to affectation, or a design to work upon their passions, which will immediately defeat the design, if you had it. For if you would effectually move the passions, you must carefully conceal your intention so to do:

for as soon as the mind perceives you have such a design upon it, it will be upon its guard. However, none but the most low, weak, and mechanical minds will be affected with mere dint of sound and noise. And the passions so raised, leave no lasting or valuable effects upon the mind, and answer no good purpose or end; because the understanding hath nothing to do with such impressions, and the memory no handle by which to retain or recall them. Not to say, it often answers a bad end, affects the mind in a wrong place, and gives it a false bias. However this may be thought to become the stage or the bar, it least of all befits the pulpit; where all ought to be solemn, serious, rational, and grave as the subjects there treated of.

It is false oratory then to seek to persuade or affect by mere vehemence of voice. A thing that hath been often attempted by men of mean furniture, low genius, or bad taste, among the ancients as well as the moderns. A practice which formerly gave the judicious Quintilian great offence; who calls it not only clamoring, but furious bellowing; not vehemence, but downright violence.

Besides, an overstrained voice is very inconvenient to the speaker, as well as disgustful to judicious hearers. It exhausts his spirits to no purpose; and takes from him the proper management and modulation of his voice according to the sense of his subject. And, what is worst of all, it naturally leads him into a tone.

Every man's voice indeed should fill the place where he speaks; but if it exceed its natural key, it will be neither sweet, nor soft, nor agreeable, because he will not be able to give every word its proper and distinguishing sound.

2. Another fault in pronunciation is when the voice is too low.

This is not so inconvenient to the speaker, but is as disagreeable to the hearer as the other extreme. And, indeed, to the generality of hearers, a too low voice is much more displeasing than a too loud one; especially to those who are troubled with an impediment in hearing, and those who are best pleased with a lively and pathetic address, as most are. It is always offensive to an audience to observe any thing in the reader or speaker that looks like indolence or inattention. The hearer will never be affected whilst he sees the speaker indifferent.

The art of governing the voice consists a good deal in dexterously avoiding these two extremes; at least, this ought to be first minded. And, for a general rule to direct you herein, I know of none better than this, viz. carefully to preserve the key, that is, the command of your voice; and at the same time, to adapt the elevation and strength of it to the condition and number of the persons you speak to, and the nature of the place you speak in. It would be altogether as ridiculous in a general, who is haranguing an army, to speak in a low and languid voice, as in a person who reads a chapter in a family to speak in a loud and eager one.

3. Another fault in pronunciation is a thick, hasty, cluttering voice.

When a person mumbles, or, as we say, clips or swallows his words, that is, leaves out some syllables in the long words, and never pronounces some of the short ones at all; but hurries on without any care to be heard distinctly, or to give his words their full sound, or his hearers the full sense of them. This is often owing to a defect in the organs of speech, or a too great flutter of the animal spirits; but oftener to a bad habit uncorrected.

Demosthenes, the greatest orator Greece ever produced, had, it is said, nevertheless, three natural impediments in pronunciation; all which he conquered by invincible labor and perseverance. One was a weakness of voice; which he cured by frequently declaiming on the sea-shore, amidst the noise of the waves. Another was a shortness of breath, which he mended by repeating his orations as he walked up a hill. And the other was the fault I am speaking of, a thick mumbling way of speaking, which he broke himself of by declaiming with pebbles in his mouth.

4. Another fault in pronunciation is when persons speak too quick.

Than which there is scarce any fault more common, especially among young persons, who imagine they can read very well, and are not afraid of being stopped in their career by the unexpected intervention of any hard word. And scarce any bad habit of the voice is conquered with more difficulty, though one would imagine nothing is more easy.

This manner of reading may do well enough when we are examining leases, perusing indentures, or reciting acts of par-

liament, where there is always a great superfluity of words; or in reading a newspaper, where there is but little matter that deserves our attention; but is very improper in reading books of devotion and instruction, and especially the sacred scriptures, where the solemnity of the subject, or the weight of the sense, demands a particular regard. But it is most of all inexcusable to read forms of prayer in this manner as acts of devotion.

The great disadvantage which attends this manner of pronunciation is, that the hearer loses the benefit of more than half the good things he hears, and would fain remember, but cannot. And a speaker should always have a regard to the memory as well as the understanding of his hearers.

5. It is also a fault to speak too slow.

Some are apt to read in a heavy, droning, sleepy way; and, through mere carelessness, make pauses at improper places. This is very disagreeable. But to hem, sneeze, yawn, or cough, between the periods, is more so.

A too slow elocution is most faulty in reading trifles that do not require attention. It then becomes tedious. A person that is addicted to this slow way of speaking, should always take care to reward his hearers' patience with important sentiments, and compensate the want of words by a weight of thought, and give his discourse its proper quantity of solid sense, that, as we say, what it wants in length it may make out in breadth.

But a too slow elocution is a fault very rarely to be found, unless in aged people, and those who naturally speak so in common conversation. And in these, if the pronunciation be in all other respects just, decent, and proper, and especially if the subject be weighty or intricate, it is very excusable.

6. An irregular or uneven voice is a great fault in reading.

That is, when the voice rises and falls by fits and starts, or when it is elevated or depressed unnaturally or unseasonably, without regard to sense or stops; or always beginning a sentence with a high voice, and concluding it with a low one, or *vice versa*; or always beginning and concluding it with he same key. Opposite to this is,

7. A flat, dull, uniform tone of voice, without emphasis or cadence, or any regard to the sense or subject of what is read.

This is a habit which children, who have been used to read their lessons by way of task, are very apt to fall into, and retain as they grow up: such a monotony as attorneys' clerks read in when they examine an engrossed deed. This is a great infelicity when it becomes habitual; because it deprives the hearer of the greatest part of the benefit or advantage he might receive by a close attention to the most weighty and interesting parts of the subject, which should always be distinguished or pointed out by the pronunciation. For a just pronunciation is a good commentary; and therefore no person ought to read a chapter or a psalm in public, before he hath carefully read it over to himself once or twice in private. But,

Lastly. The greatest and most common fault of all, is reading with a tone.

No habit is more easily to be contracted than this, or more hard to be conquered. This unnatural tone in reading and speaking is very various; but whatever it be, it is always disgustful to persons of delicacy and judgment.

Some have a womanish squeaking tone; which persons whose voices are shrill, and weak, and overstrained, are very apt to fall into.

Some have a singing or canting tone, which the speakers among the quakers generally much affect, and by which their hearers are often much affected.

Others affect a high, swelling, theatrical tone: who, being ambitious of the fame of fine orators, lay too much emphasis on every sentence, and thereby transgress the rules of true oratory.

Others affect an awful and striking tone, attended with solemn grimace, as if they would move you with every word, whether the weight of the subject bear them out or not This is what persons of a gloomy or melancholy cast of mind are most apt to give into.

Some have a set, uniform tone of voice; which I have already taken notice of.

Others an odd, whimsical, whining tone, peculiar to themselves, and not to be described; only that it is laying the emphasis on words which do not require or deserve it.

It must be owned, there are some kinds of tone, which, though unnatural, yet, as managed by the speakers, are not very disagreeable; and the mind must be much on

its guard that can remain unmoved thereby.

When I have been affected with hearing some preachers deliver common or obscure sentiments in such a striking tone, I have endeavored carefully to examine into the true reason of that emotion, or what it was that excited that affection in my mind; and have found that it could not arise from the mere tone of the speaker, which of itself was unnatural and disagreeable, nor from the weight of the subject, which was no more than common, but from the earnestness, life, and solemnity, with which he spake, and his appearing himself to be much affected with what he delivered; which two things will never fail to move an audience. And why they may not be as well observed and practised without a tone as with one, I cannot conceive. And without these, I verily believe, a tone itself would have no power to move; and that it hath no other subserviency to raise the passions than as it solemnizes the subject, and seems to show the speaker's heart engaged. Pity that those two ends should not be answered by a better means! and that a bad habit in the speaker, indulging a false taste in the hearers, should secure one great end of oratory by that which is the greatest abuse of it!

These are the most common faults of a bad pronunciation. Our next inquiry is,

II. *How to avoid them.*

To this end the few following rules may be of service.

(1.) If you would not read in too loud or too low a voice, consider whether your voice be naturally too low or loud; and correct it accordingly in your ordinary conversation; by which means you will be better able to correct it in reading. If it be too low, converse with those that are deaf; if too loud, with those whose voices are low. Begin your periods with an even moderate voice, that you may have the command of it, to raise or fall it as the subject requires.

(2.) To cure a thick, confused, clattering voice, accustom yourself, both in conversation and reading, to pronounce every word distinct and clear. Observe with what deliberation some converse and read, and how full a sound they give to every word; and imitate them. Do not affect to contract your words, or run two into one. This may do very well in conversation, or in reading familiar dialogues, but is not so decent in grave and solemn subjects; especially in reading the sacred scriptures.

It appears from Demosthenes' case, that this fault of pronunciation cannot be cured without much difficulty, nor will you find his remedy effectual without pains and perseverance.

(3.) To break a habit of reading too fast, attend diligently to the sense, weight, and propriety of every sentence you read, and of every emphatical word in it. This will not only be an advantage to yourself, but a double one to your hearers; for it will at once give them time to do the same, and excite their attention when they see yours is fixed. A solemn pause after a weighty thought is very beautiful and striking. A well-timed stop gives as much grace to speech as it does to music. Imagine that you are reading to persons of slow and unready conceptions; and measure not your hearer's apprehension by your own. If you do, you may possibly outrun it. And as in reading you are not at liberty to repeat your words and sentences, that should engage you to be very deliberate in pronouncing them, that their sense may not be lost. The ease and advantage that will arise both to the reader and hearer, by a free, full, and deliberate pronunciation, is hardly to be imagined.

I need lay down no rules to avoid a too slow pronunciation; that being a fault which few are guilty of.

(4.) To cure an uneven, desultory voice, take care that you do not begin your periods either in too high or too low a key; for that will necessarily lead you to an unnatural and improper variation of it. Have a careful regard to the nature and quantity of your points, and the length of your periods; and keep your mind intent on the sense, subject, and spirit of your author.

The same directions are necessary to avoid a monotony in pronunciation, or a dull, set, uniform tone of voice. For if your mind be but attentive to the sense of your subject, you will naturally manage and modulate your voice according to the nature and importance of it.

Lastly, to avoid all kinds of unnatural and disagreeable tones, the only rule is to endeavor to speak with the same ease and freedom as you would do on the same subject in private conversation. You hear nobody converse in a tone, unless they have

the brogue of some other country, or have got into a habit of altering the natural key of their voice when they are talking of some serious subject in religion. But I can see no reason in the world, that when in common conversation we speak in a natural voice, with proper accent and emphasis, yet as soon as we begin to read, or talk of religion, or speak in public, we should immediately assume a stiff, awkward, unnatural tone. If we are indeed deeply affected with the subject we read or talk of, the voice will naturally vary according to the passion excited; but if we vary it unnaturally, only to seem affected, or with a design to affect others, it then becomes a tone and is offensive.

In reading, then, attend to your subject, and deliver it just in such a manner as you would do if you were talking of it. This is the great, general, and most important rule of all, which, if carefully observed, will correct not only this, but almost all the faults of a bad pronunciation; and give an easy, decent, graceful delivery, agreeable to all the rules of a right elocution. For however apt we are to transgress them in reading, we follow them naturally and easily enough in conversation. And children will tell a story with all the natural graces and beauties of pronunciation, however awkwardly they may read the same out of a book.

And therefore to attain a just and proper pronunciation in reading, it will be advisable to begin with those books that are written in a familiar style, that comes nearest to that of common conversation; such as the Pilgrim's Progress, or the Family Instructor.

II. WHAT A GOOD PRONUNCIATION IS, AND HOW TO ATTAIN IT.

1. *What a good pronunciation is.*

A good pronunciation in reading, is the art of managing and governing the voice, so as to express the full sense and spirit of your author, in that just, decent, and graceful manner, which will not only instruct but affect the hearers; and will not only raise in them the same ideas he intended to convey, but the same passions he really felt. This is the great end of reading to others, and this end can only be attained by a proper and just pronunciation.

And hence we may learn wherein a good pronunciation in speaking consists; which is nothing but a natural, easy, and graceful variation of the voice, suitable to the nature and importance of the sentiments we deliver.

A good pronunciation in both these respects is more easily attained by some than others; as some can more readily enter into the sense and sentiments of an author, and more easily deliver their own, than others can; and at the same time have a more happy facility of expressing all the proper variations and modulations of the voice than others have. Thus persons of a quick apprehension, and a brisk flow of animal spirits, setting aside all impediments of the organs, have generally a more lively, just, and natural elocution than persons of a slow perception and a phlegmatic cast. However, it may in a good degree be attained by every one that will carefully attend to and practise those rules that are proper to acquire it. Which leads me therefore,

2. *To inquire how a good pronunciation is to be attained.*

And to this end the observation of the following rules is necessary.

(1.) Have a particular regard to your pauses, emphasis, and cadence.

(i.) To your *pauses*. And with respect to this, you will in a good measure in reading be directed by the points, but not perfectly; for there are but few books that are exactly pointed.

The common stops or points are these:— a comma (,), semicolon (;), colon (:), period (.), interrogation (?), and admiration (!).

But besides these, there are four more notes or distinctions of pause: a parenthesis ( ); which requires the pause of a comma at least, and sometimes a semicolon after it. 2. A double period, or blank line (——); which denotes the pause of two periods, or half a paragraph. 3. A paragraph or break; when the line is broke or left imperfect, and the next begins under the second or third letter of the preceding line; and denotes the pause of two double periods. 4. A double paragraph; that is, when the next line not only begins shorter than the preceding, but leaves the space of a whole line vacant between them; which shows that the voice is to rest during the time of two paragraphs.

These points serve two purposes. 1. To distinguish the sense of the author. 2. To direct the pronunciation of the reader.

You are not to fetch your breath, if it can be avoided, till you come to the period or full stop; but a discernible pause is to be made at every one, according to its proper quantity or duration. A comma stops the voice while we may privately tell one, a semicolon two; a colon three; and a period four.

Where the periods are very long, you may take breath at a colon or semicolon; and sometimes at a comma, but never where there is no stop at all. And that you may not be under a necessity to take fresh breath before you come to a proper pause, it will be proper to look forward to the close of the sentence, and measure the length of it with your eye before you begin it; that if it be long, you may take in a sufficient supply of breath to carry you to the end of it.

To break a habit of taking breath too often in reading, accustom yourself to read long periods, such, for instance, as the sixteen first lines in Milton's Paradise lost.

And after some weighty and important sentiment, it will be proper to make a longer pause than ordinary; and especially towards the close or application of a discourse or sermon, where the subject usually grows more serious and affecting, these long pauses are very proper; as they at once compose and affect the mind, and give it time to think. It will also be very helpful to the speaker's voice; and give his pronunciation the advantage of variety, which is always pleasing to the hearers. And therefore in printing the most affecting parts of a discourse, there should be a frequent use of the long pauses, viz. the periods, blank lines, and paragraphs.

But, after all, there is so much license admitted, and so much irregularity introduced into the modern method of punctuation, that it is become a very imperfect rule to direct a just pronunciation. The pauses, therefore, as well as the variations of the voice, must be chiefly regulated by a careful attention to the sense and importance of the subject.

(ii.) The next thing to be regarded in reading is the *emphasis;* and to see that it be always laid on the emphatical word.

When we distinguish any particular syllable in a word with a strong voice, it is called accent; when we thus distinguish any particular word in a sentence, it is called emphasis; and the word so distinguished, the emphatical word. And the emphatical words in a sentence are those which carry a weight or importance in themselves, or those on which the sense of the rest depends; and these must be always distinguished by a fuller and stronger sound of voice, wherever they are found, whether in the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence. Take for instance those words of the satirist:—

"Rém, facias rém,
Récte, si possis, si non, quocúnque modo rém."—
HORACE.
"Get pláce and weálth, if possible, with gráce,
If not, by ány means, get weálth and pláce."
POPE.

In these lines the emphatical words are accented; and which they are, the sense will always discover.

Here it may not be amiss briefly to observe two or three things.

1. That some sentences are so full and comprehensive, that almost every word is emphatical; for instance, that pathetic expostulation in the prophecy of Ezekiel, Why will ye die? In this short sentence, every word is emphatical, and on whichever word you lay the emphasis, whether the second, third, or fourth, it strikes out a different sense, and opens a new subject of moving expostulation.

2. Some sentences are equivocal, as well as some words; that is, contain in them more senses than one; and which is the sense intended, can only be known by observing on what word the emphasis is laid. For instance, "Shall you ride to town today?" This question is capable of being taken in four different senses, according to the different words on which you lay the emphasis. If it be laid on the word *you*, the answer may be "No, but I intend to send my servant in my stead." If the emphasis be laid on the word *ride*, the proper answer might be, "No, I intend to walk it." If you place the emphasis on the word *town*, it is a different question; and the answer may be, "No, for I design to ride into the country." And if the emphasis be laid upon the words *to-day*, the sense is still something different from all these; and the proper answer may be, "No, but I shall to-morrow." Of such importance oftentimes is a right emphasis, in order to determine the proper sense of what we read or speak. But I would observe,

3. The voice must express, as near as may be, the very sense or idea designed to be conveyed by the emphatical word; by a strong, rough, and violent, or a soft, smooth, and tender sound. Thus the different passions of the mind are to be expressed by a different sound or tone of voice. Love, by a soft, smooth, languishing voice; anger, by a strong, vehement, and elevated voice; joy, by a quick, sweet, and clear voice; sorrow, by a low, flexible, interrupted voice; fear, by a dejected, tremulous, hesitating voice; courage hath a full, bold, and loud voice; and perplexity, a grave, steady, and earnest one. Briefly, in exordiums the voice should be low; in narrations, distinct; in reasoning, slow; in persuasions, strong; it should thunder in anger, soften in sorrow, tremble in fear, and melt in love.

4. The variation of the emphasis must not only distinguish the various passions described, but the several forms and figures of speech in which they are expressed. e. g. In a prosopopæia, we must change the voice as the person introduced would. In an antithesis, one contrary must be pronounced louder than the other. In a climax, the voice should always rise with it. In dialogues, it should alter with the parts. In repetitions, it should be loudest in the second place. Words of quality and distinction, or of praise or dispraise, must be pronounced with a strong emphasis.

Hence then it follows, Lastly, That no emphasis at all is better than a wrong or misplaced one. For that only perplexes, this always misleads the mind of the hearer.

(iii.) The next thing to be observed is *cadence*. This is directly opposite to emphasis. Emphasis is raising the voice, cadence is falling it; and when rightly managed is very musical.

But besides a cadence of voice, there is such a thing as cadence of style. And that is, when the sense being almost expressed and perfectly discerned by the reader, the remaining words, which are only necessary to complete the period, gently fall of themselves without any emphatical word among them. And if your author's language be pure and elegant, his cadence of style will naturally direct your cadence of voice. Cadence generally takes place at the end of a sentence; unless it closes with an emphatical word. Every parenthesis is to be pronounced in cadence; that is, with a low voice, and quicker than ordinary; that it may not take off the attention too much from the sense of the period it interrupts. But all apostrophes and prosopopœias are to be pronounced in emphasis.

So much for pauses, emphasis, and cadence; a careful regard to all which is the first rule for attaining a right pronunciation.

(2.) If you would acquire a just pronunciation in reading, you must not only take in the full sense, but enter into the spirit of your author: for you can never convey the force and fulness of his ideas to another till you feel them yourself. No man can read an author he does not perfectly understand and taste.

"The great rule which the masters of rhetoric so much press, can never be enough remembered; that to make a man speak well and pronounce with a right emphasis, he ought thoroughly to understand all that he says, be fully persuaded of it, and bring himself to have those affections which he desires to infuse into others. He that is inwardly persuaded of the truth of what he says, and that hath a concern about it in his mind, will pronounce with a natural vehemence that is far more lovely than all the strains that art can lead him to. An orator must endeavor to feel what he says, and then he will speak so as to make others feel it." This is a very general and important rule, and, as Bishop Burnet says, can never enough be remembered; and hence it is that so few are able to read Milton or Young.

The same rules are to be observed in reading poetry and prose: neither the rhyme nor the numbers should take off your attention from the sense and spirit of your author. It is this only that must direct your pronunciation in poetry as well as prose. When you read verse, you must not at all favor the measure or rhyme; that often obscures the sense and spoils the pronunciation: for the great end of pronunciation is to elucidate and heighten the sense; that is, to represent it not only in a clear but a strong light. Whatever then obstructs this is carefully to be avoided, both in verse and prose. Nay, this ought to be more carefully observed in reading verse than prose; because the author, by a constant attention to his measures and rhyme, and the exaltation of his language, is often very apt to obscure his sense; which therefore

requires the more care in the reader to discover and distinguish it by the pronunciation. And if, when you read verse with proper pause, emphasis, and cadence, and a pronunciation varied and governed by the sense, it be not harmonious and beautiful, the fault is not in the reader but the author. And if the verse be good, to read it thus will improve its harmony; because it will take off that uniformity of sound and accent which tires the ear, and makes the numbers heavy and disagreeable.

(3.) Another important rule to be observed in elocution is, study nature. By this I mean,

1. Your own natural dispositions and affections. And those subjects that are most suitable to them, you will easily pronounce with a beautiful propriety; and to heighten the pronunciation, the natural warmth of the mind should be permitted to have its course under a proper rein and regulation.

2. Study the natural dispositions and affections of others. For some are much more easily impressed and moved one way, and some another; and an orator should be acquainted with all the avenues to the heart.

3. Study the most easy and natural way of expressing yourself, both as to the tone of voice and the mode of speech. And this is best learned by observations on common conversation; where all is free, natural, and easy; where we are only intent on making ourselves understood, and conveying our ideas in a strong, plain, and lively manner, by the most natural language, pronunciation, and action. And the nearer our pronunciation in public comes to the freedom and ease of that we use in common discourse, provided we keep up the dignity of the subject, and preserve a propriety of expression, the more just, and natural, and agreeable, it will generally be.

Above all things, then, study nature; avoid affectation; never use art, if you have not the art to conceal it; for whatever does not appear natural, can never be agreeable, much less persuasive.

(4.) Endeavor to keep your mind collected and composed. Guard against that flutter and timidity of spirit, which is the common infelicity of young, and especially bashful persons, when they first begin to speak or read in public. This is a great hinderance both to their pronunciation and invention; and at once gives both themselves and their hearers an unnecessary pain. It will by constant opposition wear off. And the best way to give the mind a proper degree of assurance and self-command at such a time, is,

1. To be entire master of your subject, and a consciousness that you deliver to your audience nothing but what is well worth their hearing, will give you a great degree of courage.

2. Endeavor to be wholly engaged in your subject; and when the mind is intent upon and warmed with it, it will forget that awful deference it before paid to the audience, which was so apt to disconcert it.

3. If the sight of your hearers, or any of them discompose you, keep your eyes from them.

(5.) Be sure to keep up a life, spirit, and energy in the expression, and let the voice naturally vary according to the variation of the style and subject. Whatever be the subject, it will never be pleasing if the style be low and flat; nor will the beauty of the style be discovered, if the pronunciation be so. Cicero observes, there must be a glow in our style if we would warm our hearers. And who does not observe how ridiculous it is to pronounce the *ardens verbum* in a cold lifeless tone? And the transition of the voice (as before observed) must always correspond with that of the subject, and the passions it was intended to excite.

(6.) In order to attain a just and graceful pronunciation, you should accustom yourselves frequently to those who excel in it, whether at the bar or in the pulpit; where you will see all the forementioned rules exemplified, and be able to account for all those graces and beauties of pronunciation which always pleased you, but you did not know why.

And indeed, the art of pronunciation, like all others, is better learned by imitation than rule; but to be first acquainted with the rules of it, will make the imitation more easy. And beyond all that hath been said, or can be described, you will observe a certain agreeableness of manner in some preachers that is natural to them, not to be reduced to any rule, and to be learned by imitation only; nor by that, unless it be in some degree natural to you.

Lastly, You should frequently exercise yourself to read aloud according to the fore-

going rules. It is practice only that must give you the faculty of an elegant pronunciation. This, like other habits, is only to be attained by often repeated acts. Orators indeed, as well as poets, must be born so, or they will never excel in their respective arts; but that part of oratory which consists in a decent and graceful pronunciation, provided there be no defect in the organs of speech, may be attained by rule, imitation, and practice; and, when attained, will give a beauty to your speech, a force to your thoughts, and a pleasure to the hearers, not to be expressed, and which all will admire, but none can imitate, unless they are first prepared for it by art and nature. In fine, the great advantage of a just pronunciation is, that it will please all, whether they have no taste, a bad taste, or a good taste.

Here I intended to have put an end to this essay, but as under the word pronunciation, the ancients comprehended action as well as elocution; and as a few general rules concerning that may be of use to such as speak in public, I thought it might not be improper here briefly to subjoin them.

The action then should be as easy and as natural as the elocution; and, like that, must be varied and directed by the passions. An affected violence of motion is as disgustful as an affected vehemence of voice; and no action, as bad as no emphasis; which two faults commonly go together, as do the other two, just before mentioned. Those parts of the body that are to be principally employed in oratorical action are the head, the face, the eyes, the hands, and the upper part of the whole body.

1. *The Head.* This should generally be in an erect posture; turning sometimes on one side, and sometimes on the other, that the voice may be heard by the whole audience, and a regard paid to the several parts of it. It should always be on the same side with the action of the hands and body, except when we express an abhorrence, or a refusal of any thing, which is done by rejecting it with the right hand, and turning away the head to the left; as in that sentence—*Dii talem terris avertete pestem*—where such an action is very proper in pronouncing the word *avertete*.

2. *The Countenance.* In this is the seat of the soul, and the very life of action. Every passion, while uttered with the tongue, should be painted in the face. There is often more eloquence in a look than any words can express. By this we are awed, charmed, incensed, softened, grieved, rejoiced, raised, or dejected, according as we catch the fire of the speaker's passion from his face. In short, there is no end in recounting the force and effects of this dumb oratory, which nature only teaches, and which persons of low passions lose all the advantages of. Look well upon a good piece of painting where the passions are strongly expressed, and you will conceive the power of it.

3. *The Eyes.* These should be carried from one part of the audience to another, with a modest and decent respect, which will tend to recall and fix their attention, and animate your own spirit by observing their attention fixed. But if their affections be strongly moved, and the observing it be a means of raising your own too high, it will be necessary then to keep the eye from off them. For though an orator should always be animated, he should never be overcome by his passions.

In all appeals to heaven, and sometimes at the solemn mention of the name of the great God, the eyes and the head should be turned upward. In adoration, the hands and eyes should be lifted up, and the head and body bowing down. In solemn vows, exclamations, and appeals to heaven, the hands, head, and eyes should all be lifted up; but in humiliation and confession bowed down. The language of the eye is inexpressible. It is the window of the soul; from which sometimes the whole heart looks out at once, and speaks more feelingly than all the warmest strains of oratory, and comes effectually in aid of it, when the passion is too strong to be uttered.

4. *The Hands.* The left hand should never be used alone, unless it be to attend the motion of the head and eyes in an address to the audience on the left side. The right hand may be often used alone. When you speak of the body, you may point to it with the middle finger of your right hand. When you speak of your soul or conscience you may lay your right hand gently on your breast. It should be often displayed with an easy motion to favor an emphasis, but seldom or never be quite extended. All its motions should be from the left to the right. Both the hands displayed, and the arms

extended, is a violent action, and never just or decent unless the audience be noisy, and part of them at a distance from the speaker, and he is laboring to be heard; and then they should never be extended higher than the head, unless pointing at something above the audience.

The motions of the hand should always correspond with those of the head and eyes; as they should with the passions expressed. In deliberate proof or argumentation, no action is more proper or natural than gently to lay the first finger of the right hand on the palm of the left. Of what great use the proper motion of the hand is in assisting pronunciation, and how many passions may be strongly indicated thereby, when attended with that of the head and eyes, is not easy to be described, but is soon observed in common conversation.

Lastly, *The posture of the body.* This should be usually erect; not continually changing, nor always motionless; declining in acts of humiliation; in acts of praise and thanksgiving, raised. It should always accompany the motion of the hands, head, and eyes, when they are directed to any particular part of the audience; but never so far as to let the back be turned to any part of it. But let it suffice just to hint at these things. They who desire to see them more largely treated of, may consult *Quinctilian de Institutione Oratoriâ*, lib. xi. cap. 3.

But after all, with regard to action, the great rule is the same as in pronunciation, to follow nature, and avoid affectation. The action of the body, and the several parts of it, must correspond with the pronunciation, as that does with the style, and the style with the subject: a perfect harmony of all which completes the orator.

XIII.—ON THE ACTION OF THE PULPIT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE ABBE BESPLAS.

Let us now behold the orator in the pulpit. His position ought to be the most decent. Nothing contributes more to the success of a discourse than the dignity of his front; his collectedness, a kind of religious dread expressed on his countenance, announcing the grandeur of the ministry he comes to fill. Let him hold his head without affectation: too high, gives him a proud air; too low, impresses on his words an air of timidity; inclining to one side, betrays carelessness, perhaps the air of a hypocrite; let it remain in a just medium, in a free and natural position. Certain orators shake it very much, and these disorderly motions exceedingly shock the hearer; the head being the seat of the soul, indicates by these violent and precipitate motions, a trouble which the majesty of the divine word forbids.

Some preachers are not less embarrassed with their eyes, in which the greatest part of public action resides, and which, in case of all other things being wanting, would nearly suffice for the success of a discourse. Immoveable eyes indicate stupidity or fear; too roving, a kind of delirium; too open, wrath or astonishment; too much closed, distrust, or rather contempt; they ought to have an animated character, and always sweet and modest, which nature has reserved for this timid confidence, which admirably connects these two sentiments, apparently so opposite.

This modesty is so much the more becoming, as the pulpit requires but little gesture and movement. They are less necessary here than at the bar. The hearer knows that the divine word is independent of human support; and it is strange that he should understand it better than the speaker. If the preacher imitates theatrical action, the discourse offers a character the most reprehensible; the indignant hearer will quickly conclude in himself, that such a science has been learned in some place, where they were ignorant of religion. Cicero and Quinctilian censure this gesture and theatrical action at the bar; how much more would they have reprobated it under the eyes even of the Divinity. A sermon in the temple has too much importance to stand in need of this guilty resource. Draw not upon yourself the regards of the hearer, but rather turn them upon himself.

Preachers attached to such profane manners, have not reflected on the difference of action in the theatre, and in the sacred place: there the actor mends, in assuming the mask of each order, in showing to each his particular character; on the contrary, in the temple men are only one common denomination, that of sinners; it is God himself who accuses, and he requires only

one language to thunder against them with.

I require then in the pulpit, a species of calmness, and of silence; an infallible sign of the most perfect declamation. Let all speak in the orator, in a sort of mute manner; that the body form but one whole, contributing by each movement to the general action.

Those who say that one must wait for the printing of a sermon, to determine its merit, deceive themselves on the nature and object of a discourse. A sermon printed is only the moiety of itself; it is a mute word, which is out of its natural place: it wants its relation with the times, the solemnity, the hearers; also the means made use of by the preacher in the pulpit, and which sometimes produced an unexpected effect, all of which is out of place to the reader, and in the calm of reflection.

In an author, the sermon deprived of its principal majesty, is, in a manner, nothing more than a subject to serve the demonstration of the parts of the oratorical body; the spirit of life is departed from it. I will yet proceed farther; if the discourse be well composed, it must show in the impression, the defects which were beauties at the moment when preached, the exclamations, affecting sentiments which wither when deprived of the succors of utterance. Add the daring traits which utterance accomplished, to give grandeur and clearness, but which are now wanting.

There is a kind of beauty which printing can never produce; that which a sermon received from the splendor of religion, the aspect of the altars, the stillness of the hearers; in fine, from all the pomp which surrounds the orator, and which cannot follow him out of the pulpit.

The maxims we have established must not be abused, by employing them in the pulpit, by only using in that place a declamation and a gesture much circumscribed. Moderation in utterance, far from excluding great movements, requires them in certain impassioned places. Action ought to increase with the progress of the passions, which it animates and supports. The orator should kindle according to the greatness of the obstacles which his zeal means to overturn; he is a kind of a wrestler who combats. If one therefore sees the agitation, even a front a little darkened by the anxieties of fear, that at intervals it assumes a new ardor; when it is most calm let his action paint even in his repose.

Fenelon remarks, that our nation, too timid and too light, is not proper to feel the effect of great movements, neither in composition, nor in declamation sustained. The Hebrews, the Orientals, the Greeks, the Romans, adds he, very much excelled us in this nature. Plutarch observes, that this vivid action in the tribune came in use among the Romans in the times of the Greeks. Let us rather attend to nature than to a taste so delicate, which at the bottom is only weakness. Nothing is more conformable to nature, than an action proportioned to the sentiment expressed. Our body is the vessel which reason directs. How can it remain calm in a tempest? To an impassioned composition, a warm utterance is necessary. If we blame the Italian declamation, the reason is because it exceeds the things expressed. A multitude of gestures discompose, so to speak, a discourse, which to obtain its end, ought to form only one great concert. Nothing is therefore more dissonant, than to speak that with emphasis, which requires a simple tone; or coldly, what demands animation.

The beauty of discourse appearing more especially in declamation, all is wanting when it is deprived of this charm; and when it is not accompanied with an utterance such as becomes the sacred place. The first part of an orator, remarks Cicero, according to Demosthenes, is good language, utterance; the second is good language; the third is good language; so much have our ears the absolute and blind empire over our minds.

One cannot begin too early to acquire the decent graces of declamation, and of public action. These are too much neglected, as well as eloquence herself, in the seminaries, and in the communities of the religious; thus they have to encounter in an age too advanced, those obstacles which it is not easy to surmount. Make yourself master of nature, whilst she is flexible; the least delay, leaves man to mingle with his timidity and imperfections. We soon perceive if an orator has been accustomed in early life to speak in public, the soul easily manages the body, when from the beginning it has felt her power.

We do not design to elevate the art above just measure. Nature abandoned to her

own movements, will frequently leave behind her the most studied action, and exhibit graces which science cannot give, and even render faults pleasing by her embellishment; one happy, one sublime moment is sufficient to repair the whole. Let the front unfold majesty, let the animated eyes dart appropriate regards; these are needful to give the discourse a deep impression. The congregation will depart as well satisfied, as if an action more regular, but less impressive, had accompanied the discourse. This grace is not only a beauty, but also very pleasing. Bourdaloue preached with his eyes closed, his hands united, and reposed on the pulpit, and himself motionless. This immobility has its force and majesty; it is the repose of a power always ready to act. If at the bar the passions are petitioners, here they enjoy the privilege of religion, and like her predominate; their silence takes nothing from their authority.

Nothing wounds more in the pulpit than disorderly gesture. Some preachers have always the air of indignation. They bellow, they scream, they heat and torment themselves; these are the emotions of zeal unhappily placed. Whenever action exceeds its modest bounds, it is to the injury of the effect which it ought to produce. The Spirit of God is more calm. The orator in a passion breaks the majestic silence which ought to reign at the feet of the altars, and which so well becomes solemn action. St. Augustin said, that for the interest even of eloquence, external action ought to be simple. And this celebrated doctor deserves credit, if it be the province of great hearts to dictate laws for preaching.

Sweetness, with a noble simplicity, should form the constant character of declamation. Such a preacher is extremely circumspect, who pleases most by the sweetness of his utterance; it announces a candor, an ingenuity which communicates to discourse all sorts of charms. It is said that sweetness has secret turns for insinuating into hearts, to banish all the obstacles met with there.

The vivacity of utterance adds much interest to public action. This rapidity makes the hearer more vigilant and attentive, and unites him much more to the speaker. The discourse then appears less borrowed; it has a march more free and easy; but this agreement approaches very nearly to an insupportable fault; it is precipitation which made Montaigne say, that he would rather the hearer was a little slow. This defect involves another, with which a great many preachers are infected; it makes them fall at the close of the phrase. Hence a continual embarrassment in the mind of the hearer, and in his ear a confusion which destroys all the charms of harmony. Sometimes the weakness of the organ prevents the speaker from regularly keeping up his voice; in that case he should take a moderate key; but the fault more generally proceeds from an ignorance of rules. Regulate declamation by the extent of the thoughts, make these lean on the voice, as the mind reposes on them. Nothing is more easy for him who foresees the difficulty, and accustoms himself at an early stage of life to pronounce well; but nothing is more painful for him who has neglected this in his early exercises.

Let the voice be firm in the proofs, vehement in reproaches, timid and suppliant in prayer, grave in counsels, tender in affections, interrupted in complaints, free and flowing in narration; or if you please, in making the anatomy of sermons, to proceed by a shorter way. Give to each member of the phrase an imperceptible pause, to the phrase a longer pause, to the period a marked repose. Suspend the tone on the accessory ideas, cause it to fall on the ideas where it ought to rest.

Quinctilian enters into long details on pronunciation, which at first appears too minute, but which contains the genuine alphabet of nature. The articulation of words contains a mechanism of wide extent, which ought to be known, either by rules, or by long habits of speaking well. Moreover, it may be said to such as cleared away the obstacles, that nature greatly assists labor: one learns to read as to declaim, and whoever has learned the mystery of this last operation, learns this ability from the eyes, to walk, so to speak, before the phrase, to furnish in advance the words which he must pronounce; and doubtless this is nature; it is nature that conducts us by these secret paths, where we ought to engage ourselves with as much confidence as admiration.

The most common defect of preachers is that of monotony; laziness of the instrument is the principal cause; efforts are

attended with labor, and he must change his tone. The manner of learning contributes much to this; they declaim as they recite, and they recite without any constraint, and nearly always in the same tone. But how can this be mended? We ignoramuses are persuaded that it is impossible to learn otherwise. In effect, who could ever tie himself up to declaim as often as he resumes his manuscript? The only way of correcting this fault, and we have advised the same to reanimate oratorical fire, is to give the sermon some rest, and not read it till within a few days of preaching. This repose leaves the soul the necessary time to give to each part the proper intonation. At the bar they learn less exactly, and consequently the action is more free, and monotony less remarkable. In the theatre, the tone of the interlocutor recalls the actor to the tone of nature, and to the movements which the passion demands; but in the pulpit there is nothing to guide the orator in his path. It concerns him, therefore, to be well prepared.

Fear likewise contributes much to monotony; the imposing view of a congregation, a universal silence, all ears attentive, all eyes directed to him alone, in fine, the apprehension of failing in the critical moment, before so intelligent a company; these are the difficulties and the subjects of timidity. The attention which must be paid to passion, becomes a distraction to his memory, and the orator dares not abandon himself to it. A strong memory is therefore necessary, where the mind can repose without fear or danger.

If a declamation too studied be improper, both to the dignity of the pulpit and the genuine orator, if all should be grave and simple in his action; yet ought he certainly to respect a ministry so exalted, as not to neglect attention to such rules as may add much majesty to action.

Some preachers fear, and chant or whine instead of declaiming. This fault must wound the ears of the most indulgent. Others rattle away at random, without knowing when to pause, nor where the tone or key taken at the beginning will lead to; this declamation is not less shocking. Utterance ought to reject these dissonant inflexions, and never depart from the moderation of lovely nature. A pronunciation too high gives declamation an infantile and effeminate character, which of all others is the most shocking to the gravity of the pulpit. Such screaming fatigues and wounds the organ. In short, it nearly always degenerates into hoarseness. A voice too low has another inconvenience. The words mingle, are embarrassing, and carry to the ear nothing more than confused sounds.

A rule which is preferable to all others, a rule most certain and becoming the preacher, is to resign himself to his zeal. A warm desire of procuring the happiness of those who hear us, is the most infallible means of engaging them. The rules of art can never reach this degree of truth. When once the hearer has resigned his soul, his ears, his eyes have no longer dominion over a word which an invincible action supplies more powerfully than external rules. Cicero declares that probity inspires this strong eloquence, which never generates in a heart depraved. We farther advance concerning public action; zeal imparts an energy admired by the most delicate minds; it must be acknowledged that rules are the work of men, and that zeal is the gift of heaven.

Formerly, public worship possessed the means of affecting which no longer exist. The places consecrated by religion, where the primitive church celebrated her formidable mysteries, announcing the silence and the terror, impressed the word with the greatest character. The orators elevated their voices from the bottom of gloomy caverns, inspired still more by recollection. The glory of God, which descended in these august caves, seemed to speak itself, and to cover with its rays the minister and the faithful who heard him. At the present day nearly the whole is left to man.

The priests conducted the faithful to the tombs of the martyrs, where each one came to take an oath to religion to die in her cause. There, since that day altars have been raised; and in the midst of blood yet smoking, they pronounced the sacred hymns which produced new martyrs. What powerful arms for the divine word!

It cannot be too often repeated,—eloquence derives infinite advantages from sensible things; it triumphs over all where it can strike man by one of his senses. When the religion of heaven became that of the empire, our sacred ceremonies displayed a new majesty; baptism was conferred with greater pomp; the penitents

separated from the communion of the faithful, made the porch of the temple to resound with their groanings,—the agapes, or love-feasts, uniting all the faithful in common tenderness. These means were infallible for securing the effect of a discourse; the apostleship exercised, so to speak, by every surrounding object. Frequently the confessors of faith, who bore in their bodies the glorious marks of their sufferings endured for the cause of Christ, ascended into the pulpit. What eloquent mouths were these glorious scars with which they were covered!

Our missionaries frequently employ sensible objects to excite various sentiments in the hearers: this conduct may have its use among ignorant men, but it cannot succeed among persons whose correcter taste puts them upon their guard against such means.

It is reported that the bishop of Lizieux, pronouncing the funeral oration of father Joseph, held in his hand the heart of that celebrated religionist. This spectacle presented in so important a circumstance must touch; but converted into a custom, would only inspire cold horror. The soul strongly agitated by means of the senses, will guard against a similar recurrence; sensible objects exposed without precaution, defeat their object; man wishes to converse with man only.

The last advice which we would give to those who are destined to the ministry, is to guard against affectation, as a fault of the greatest magnitude. An action too much studied is sufficient to destroy the fruit of a whole sermon. Some preachers ascend the pulpit, less filled with their subject than themselves, seeking by affected and polished tones, to turn the whole attention of the auditory on themselves. These orators betray not only the majesty of eloquence, but fail much more in the object which self-love proposes. They forget that the eyes of the hearer, collected by religion, not unfrequently fortified by envy, and by it rendered infinitely penetrating, do not lose a single motion or gesture of the speaker. They find only a man where they expected an ambassador of God. Nor is nature less wounded than religion; how is it possible to believe that passions thus occupied on themselves are genuine? Nothing can regulate fire, and nothing can imitate fire but fire itself.

Reflections continue to present themselves in a crowd on a subject susceptible of such great interest, and with so many views. But we think enough has been said in favor of orators, whose genius needs only to be awakened, to find these precepts. In the mean time, let us offer a tribute of a new kind to an art which confers as much glory on those who exercise it, as happiness to the world where it perpetuates the reign of virtue and religion.

XIV.—ON PUBLIC PRAYER.

BY THE REV. P. DODDRIDGE, D. D.

Prayer is a matter of great difficulty, and great importance to our usefulness, and has a greater influence even on preaching than many are aware of. I shall first suggest some general directions relating to your improvement in the gift and grace of prayer.

1. Furnish yourselves with a variety of matter proper for prayer;—for this purpose converse much with your own hearts, get well acquainted with the state of your own souls, attend to your own spiritual wants and weaknesses, frequently recollect the mercies you have received from God, and inquire what returns you have made. Study the nature, works, and ways of God; make yourselves familiarly conversant with his word, and let what you read there, or in other good books, be considered in particular as affording matter for prayer. Pray over what you have been reading, and seldom close your Bible, or lay a book of practical divinity out of your hands, without at least a short collect formed upon it.

2. Make a serious business of secret and family prayer. Have your stated times for more private exercises of devotion, and be careful in them. Do not hurry them over in a few careless words, nor be satisfied unless you have daily some communion with God in them. Labor hard to bring your hearts to a serious frame, when approaching to God in them.

3. In all your prayers avoid the extremes of too mean and too pompous a style. A pompous style shows a mind too full of self, and too little affected with the sense of divine things. Who would regard a beggar telling a fine story of his calamities? But, on the other hand, take heed of phrases, too mean and paltry; low images, and saucy

familiarities with the ever blessed God. A guard against these should be always maintained; but especially in public. Let all be grave and simple; and appear to aim at nothing but a pouring out of the soul before God, in the most genuine language of an humble and devout temper. Avoid splendid borrowed expressions, which are sure to be remembered by those who have read them.

4. Guard against sentences excessively long when you pray with others, lest they should not understand you. It is better to have them too short, though the sound of the period be injured, as this is but a small matter compared with the former.

5. Be generally careful to observe a method in your prayers. The principal parts of prayer are invocation with adoration, confession, petition, intercession with thanksgiving, which here may be connected by proper transitions; but it is not necessary that they should always succeed each other in this order. Thanksgiving may full as well come before confession, and the several parts may sometimes be variously intermingled and combined. Thus invocation need not always be confined to the beginning of a prayer; but may properly be repeated by way of preface to some of the principal petitions, remembering to make mention of the most suitable divine attributes; and the like mixture there may be of confession or thanksgiving with petition.

6. Be not too solicitous to introduce novelties into your prayers. Desire not to pray as nobody ever prayed before, or will probably ever pray again. Novelties may sometimes amuse, but in prayer they more frequently disgust; besides, they have the appearance of too much art; and as new things are generally the produce of the imagination, they are not so proper for prayer as for preaching, and even in that service they must be moderate.

7. Remember that it is the peculiar office of the Spirit of God to help us in prayer. Engage in it, therefore, in dependence upon him; and maintain a continual dependence on the intercession and influence of Christ.

8. I shall now give you some directions which relate more immediately to public prayer.

I. Begin, with a solemn recollection of spirit. Think seriously of the majesty of that Being to whom you are addressing yourselves, and of the importance of the business in which you are engaging. Think how near you, and those who join with you, are to the tribunal of God! and lift up your hearts in devout ejaculations to him for such degrees of present assistance as he shall think proper to bestow.

II. Begin rather lower than you intend to proceed, and somewhat slower,—and as you get warm take heed of being transported into raptures, even although you should be melted into tears. Always keep up a solemnity of spirit and behavior; avoid and abhor a periodical tone. Use but little action, and that chiefly the holding up, and sometimes a little stretching out of the hand. Whether you should keep your eyes shut or not, is to be referred to your own judgment. If you can be composed it is better to keep them open, but generally fixed; especially, do not look about upon the people, nor seem to notice who comes in.

III. Remember to introduce the most applicable of the subjects you have lately heard or read, and any peculiar scriptures that have been the subject of your late meditations or discourse. And for this purpose keep notes of them in your pocket-book, that they may be often reviewed a little intervals. But whatever scheme you may form, do not adhere to it so exactly as to neglect proper thoughts and expressions that may rise; or be very uneasy if you should lose sight of it.

IV. Make frequent pauses in prayer, that you may think a little before you speak; and that your hearers may recollect their thoughts and review yours. Observe this rule, and expletives will be less necessary.

V. Endeavor to have a unity of design running through your scheme of prayer, and let one petition be connected with another by natural, but never labored transition. It is better there should be no connection at all, than any that seems forced and affected.

VI. Insist chiefly on those parts of prayer that suit best with your own frame and state, not entirely, however, to the neglect of others; and endeavor to keep up a constant sense of your own concern in what you ask.

VII. Forget not the public, but pray for them with seriousness. Plead for heathens, Jews, Mahometans, papists, and persecuted protestants; pray for your own country

with cordial love and esteem. Remember that praying for the king is part of the condition on which our toleration is granted. Forget not magistrates and ministers; but recollect of what great importance their character and conduct is, and observe scripture expressions that may be properly applied to any of these uses.

VIII. Remember the particular cases of your hearers, and the immediate concerns of the congregation. Here pray for the aged and the young, and particularly for the children of the flock. Pray for the heads of families, and thus remind them of their duty, the conscientious discharge of which is of such vast importance to religion. Pray for unconverted sinners, as seeing them upon the brink of hell! Plead earnestly for them; this is often the means of awakening them; and in this respect, while we are yet speaking, God appears to hear. Remember tenderly the afflicted and the tempted, and let particular cases have a moderate share in your addresses; this engages the affections of the people greatly, and is often the means of administering support.

IX. Let the blessed work of praise have a large share in your prayers. This made up much of the ancient liturgies, and is so suited to the Lord's day, that it is a pity that it is not more regarded. Labor to affect your own hearts with a sense of God's mercies to you at all times, and then you will always be in a frame for this.

X. Use many scripture expressions in prayer. They are peculiarly affecting, and very proper; and the hearers also from the beginning of them will know what they are to expect; and thus one great objection against extempore prayer will be removed.

XI. Take care that you are not too long in prayer before the sermon. For this purpose it is best to throw what relates to the public into the last prayer, especially when preaching in or about London; twenty minutes is generally enough, nor is fifteen too little. Let the last prayer be agreeable to the sermon; introduce the principal thoughts and heads, but do not turn it into a preaching prayer, nor repeat any peculiar fine passages of the sermon, lest you should seem too fond of them. Rather introduce some additional thoughts, which you had not time to introduce in your sermon. And if you pray at any time after any of your brethren have been preaching, suit your prayer as much as possible to what you have heard; and, on the whole, make it a kind of specimen to the people of the manner in which sermons ought to be prayed over by them.

XV.—PUBLIC PRAYER.

BY THE REV. H. HUMPHREY, D. D., PRESIDENT OF AMHERST COLLEGE, U. S.

I CANNOT dismiss the subject of your pulpit performances, without offering a few hints upon prayer. Prayer, as the only medium of communication between earth and heaven, is an exceedingly important part of public worship. In your sermons, you are the mouth of God to the people. In your prayers, you are the mouth of the people to God; and how important, that when you rise up in the great congregation to address the "High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity," your "lips should be touched with a live coal from off his altar." Were you an episcopal minister, the great thing would be to read well. Having all the prayers before you in the liturgy, you would of course feel no anxiety in regard to the matter. But as you are a presbyterian, and pray without a book, the case is very different. You are responsible for the matter, as well as the manner. You must compose your prayers either in the study or in the pulpit.

Some theological teachers advise their pupils to write out their prayers at first, and commit them to memory. This method has undoubtedly some advantages; and I had much rather you would adopt it than to go into the pulpit with a stammering tongue, or without a serious premeditation. But it seems to me liable to some weighty objections. If you write and commit your prayers, when you enter the ministry, you will be very apt to fall into a dull and formal monotony. The words and sentences which you have committed to memory and repeated often, will occur to your mind, to the exclusion of other and equally appropriate language. The consequence will be, that you will never be likely to acquire the power of expressing your thoughts freely and copiously, on all the topics of prayer which will be suggested by the ever-varying circumstances of your congregation. It appears to me, that the better way

for theological students and young pastors is, to prepare themselves, not by writing, but by studying the scriptures, to pour out their hearts to God, as the thoughts arise in their minds. In this way, they will soon be able to express themselves with fluency and propriety on all occasions and at the shortest notice.

Am I right in thinking, that this branch of education for the ministry is less attended to than its importance demands? I confess it appears to me, that many of our young ministers preach much better than they pray. And may not the reason be that preaching has some how come to be thought a much more important branch of public worship than prayer. But is this a right view of the subject? Our fathers did not think so. They laid great stress upon appropriate fervent prayer, and were remarkable for the apt and free use of scripture in their prayers. They seemed to think, that the more of the Bible they could bring in the better. Were they mistaken? Would the churches have been more edified with their devotional exercises in the sanctuary, if they had breathed out the desires of their hearts more in polished sentences of their own, and less in the language of David, and Isaiah, and Paul? Whether it is because some of the younger brethren in the ministry, who preach exceedingly well, intentionally avoid the use of scripture in their prayers, or because it is so much less familiar to them than it was to the fathers, I shall not pretend to say; but whatever may be the reason, the difference is very striking indeed. Let those who hear the greatest number of preachers at home and abroad take particular notice, and tell me whether I am right or wrong in my impressions. Would it perceptibly shorten some of their prayers, to take out of them every word of scripture which they contain?

I hope that your prayers will be eminently biblical, as well as fervent, comprehensive, and appropriate. Nothing so enriches the devotional exercises of the sanctuary as the language of the inspired writers. Nothing breathes into these exercises so much of the breath of spiritual life. Nothing elevates an assembly of devout worshippers so near to the gate of heaven. You cannot study the word of God too diligently with reference to this particular object. It was said of an eminently devoted minister of the Old South Church in the city of Boston, that he committed the whole book of Psalms to memory, so that he might always have at command an inexhaustible store of the most appropriate language for prayer. I would that every young minister might be induced to do the same. The task once entered upon would be delightful, and might be accomplished in less than half a year. One of these hundred and fifty sacred lyrics might upon an average be committed daily without the least interference with other duties. This single acquisition would make you infinitely richer than thousands of gold and silver.

The leading and essential topics of prayer are invocation, adoration, confession, petition, and thanksgiving. All these should be brought in every sabbath day, and you will find yourself greatly assisted by something like the methodical arrangement which is here indicated. Sometimes you will dwell longer upon one topic, sometimes upon another, and sometimes you will find it convenient, perhaps, to adopt a different order. But regard to method you must always have. If you commence without a plan, you will be liable to wander, you know not where, to fall into bewildering, if not "vain repetitions," and to protract the exercise to a tiresome length.

You will find it very much for your improvement in the gift of prayer, to make the chapter which you read in your family devotions the main subject of the exercise, in the way of confession, petition, or thanksgiving, as either of these topics may be most distinctly suggested. You will also, if my own experience does not deceive me, derive much advantage to yourself, while you impress scriptural truth more deeply upon the hearts of your congregation, by going over the leading topics of your last sermon in prayer, while they are yet fresh in the minds of all. For example, if you preach on depravity, or faith, or repentance in the forenoon, make that the burden of your first prayer in the afternoon. It is well, I think, generally to confine your morning prayer chiefly to the state and wants of your own people, and to reserve the other and more public topics for the evening.

Avoid every thing like ostentation in prayer. Let your language be simple and child-like. Let your attitude be reverential, as becomes a worm of the dust addressing a God of infinite majesty and pu

nty. Let the tones of your voice be solemn, but natural—supplicatory, but not affected. Let your enunciation be deliberate, but not drawling. Be careful not to weary the congregation by the unreasonable length of your prayers. On ordinary occasions a quarter of an hour before the sermon, and two or three minutes at the close, is probably as long as is profitable, though I would by no means have you always confine yourself to any definite limits. Much will depend upon your own spiritual frame and that of your people.

As helps to improvement in prayer, let me recommend to you both Watts and Henry as invaluable. I do not see how a young minister can do without them.

One suggestion more, and I have done. Whenever you are called upon to make the introductory, or consecrating, or concluding prayer at an ordination, keep within your own proper limits, both as to time and topics. For want of a due regard to this caution, the whole ground is often gone over two or three times. In almost every thing but the name, the first prayer is the ordaining prayer, and it is well if he who closes the exercises does not go back and set the candidate over the people for the third time.

XVI.—PUBLIC PRAYER.

BY THE REV. E. PARSONS, LATE OF LEEDS.

THIS subject has been hitherto most criminally neglected amongst us, and the advocates of forms of prayer have been supplied with some of their strongest arguments against what is denominated "free prayer." For these reasons I would now call your attention to the importance I attach to the proper discharge of this duty, and to some advice founded on its importance.

Why, I ask, in the first place, why should all your attention to arrangement and preparation, be devoted to the sermon? I know you will not preach without thinking; then why pray without thinking? Is previous thought necessary in your addresses to man, but wholly unnecessary in your supplications to God? I exhort you to study variety in this exercise, and be duly attentive to the method. Let the language in which you address yourself, be such as becomes the divine Majesty; avoid all irreverent familiarity; and discard all low and cant phraseology, with all those hackneyed expressions which sound upon the ear with freezing and deadening formality.

Guard also against the use of unmeaning and contradictory expressions. For instance, I have heard some brethren, who after praying half an hour or more, and preaching an hour and ten or twenty minutes, and singing three hymns of accordant length,—I have heard such brethren, after wearying the patience of a whole congregation by their prolixity, quaintly pray, that "God would forgive their short comings." Your own recollection will easily furnish you with instances, equally illustrative of the other particulars I have mentioned.

But what shall be said of that spirit of rancor which so grossly violates the spirit, and perverts the design of prayer? I am ashamed to reflect upon the angry and vindictive tones, in which some are apt to address the God of love, whenever they happen to be offended with man. Whatever you may suffer from the scourge of the tongue, or any other instrument of a persecuting malignity, never let your sufferings extort from you a word that would savor of a retaliatory disposition. If we ought not to hint at private disagreements, disputes, and discords, in preaching the gospel of peace, how much more cautious we should be against this, when we publicly supplicate the throne of grace! The man who can be so overcome by an evil temper as to "pray at" those who displease him, is guilty of contemptible meanness and disgusting impiety.

Do not preach in prayer. I mean not to exclude the proper language of adoration, but you have no occasion to spend your time in telling God what he is, how many great and glorious perfections he possesses, and in what manner he governs the world; nor is it necessary that you should expatiate upon the doctrinal articles of your creed, or the institutions and obligations of religion. And I would further advise you not to pray specifically for yourself in public. Who can hear with devotional feelings, such language as this: "Lord, have respect unto thy poor unworthy servant who is now to speak in thy name; look

upon thy poor worm, thy weak and sinful dust; own the meanest and most worthless of all thy instruments." All this, to be sure, sounds very humble, it is even self-degradation; but, with all my charity, I can never help suspecting the lurking principle of it, and with all my courage, I would not venture, in the hearing of these brethren, to pray for them in their own humiliating dialect. Humble yourself before God in your closet, and he will honor you in his house, without any of this fulsome parade about yourself.

Avoid every thing that is inconsistent with devotional simplicity; and that savors of pharisaical commendation. When you feel most humility and fervor of spirit in public prayer, keep your feelings to yourself. The expressions of devotional experience that may be indulged in private, are often highly improper in a mixed assembly. The terms "most humbly—most earnestly," and other similar epithets, applied both to prayer and praise, should be used very cautiously. As you expect your congregation to unite in your petitions to God, your words should be such as will admit of their doing so without incurring the guilt of presumption. Generalize as much as possible both the language and the subject-matter of your prayers; and descend to no particulars that might offend the chaste ear of devotion, or, in any respect, frustrate the design of the exercise. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be chosen and few."

XVII.—THE CONNECTION OF SCIENCE WITH PULPIT MINISTRATIONS.

BY THE REV. DR. HOPKINS, PRESIDENT OF WILLIAMS COLLEGE, U. S.

In its literal acceptation, and in its highest character, the gospel is good tidings; and it is the grand business of those who preach it, to commend it as worthy of all acceptation to them that are lost. Nothing can compensate in a preacher for the want of a heart-felt conviction of the ruin of man, and that the gospel is the all-sufficient and the only remedy; and nothing can excuse him if he do not urge the acceptance of this remedy upon his fellow-men with his utmost force of intellect and energy of feeling. His appropriate office is to preach the gospel of peace, to bring glad tidings of good things, to stand as an ambassador for Christ, and to beseech men in his stead to be reconciled to God. But though this is the chief, it is not the only relation which the preacher holds to society; for as the light of the sun not only reveals to us the azure depths from which it comes, but also quickens vegetation into life, and spreads a mantle of beauty over the earth, so does the gospel of Christ not only reveal our relations to God and the heaven which is to be our home, but it is spread over all the social relations, and is an essential element in the production of that moral verdure without which society would be a waste. Where the Sun of righteousness shines, the whole soil is meliorated. The hemlock and the nightshade grow less rankly, the natural affections expand more fully and shed a sweeter fragrance, and the seed sown bears fruit for this life as well as for life eternal. The system which the preacher advocates is therefore not isolated and arbitrary; it is not a foreign and discordant mass thrown into society and fitted only to be a source of terror to some, of ridicule to others, and a curse to all; but it has relations to the works of God, to the social and political well-being of man, to the secret thoughts and hidden structure, as well as to the immortal destiny of the soul. It is only in the atmosphere of a pure Christianity that social man can attain his true stature. In this he moves and respires freely, while every other system is like an atmosphere more or less deprived of its vital principle, and lies like an oppressive and suffocating weight upon him. As well then may the natural philosopher rest satisfied with his knowledge of the literal atmosphere as the breath of life, and disregard its connection with vegetation, and its use in evaporating water, and reflecting light, and conveying sound, and facilitating commerce, as may the preacher of Christianity consider it simply in its relation to another world, without regarding its connection with the works of God, and its present influence on the well-being of society.

How then shall the gospel be studied so as most fully to liberalize the mind, and to fit the pulpit to stand, as it should, far more than at present, as the great educator of a

Christian community, and the guardian of its dearest temporal as well as immortal interests? I reply, that in order to this, the gospel must be studied, first, as a science, connected in its general spirit with other sciences; and second, in the simplicity of its plan, and the variety of its adaptations to the works of God, and the different conditions of individual and social man.

When I speak of the connection of Christianity, in its general spirit, with other sciences, I have no reference to that mere accidental and external connection which has been occasionally a topic of deep interest since the time of Galileo. At intervals within the last two or three hundred years there has appeared some new science or discovery shooting athwart the religious horizon, which has seemed to the timid religionist like the comet of old, not a part of our system, but sent for its destruction. For a time he has watched its progress with breathless apprehension, till it has perhaps seemed to pass out of sight into the darkness of infidelity; while there has been heard rising on every side demoniac exultation. Then it is that he has settled back upon that faith which he alone knows of who does the will of God, and after resting awhile in that position, has been surprised to see the same erratic star circling back, and coming in to do homage to revelation. Thus has it ever been, thus will it ever be; and the duty of the preacher in regard to this department, is to keep himself informed of the facts, to promote investigation by all the means in his power, and not to be soon troubled in his mind as though every eastern forgery had the evidence of holy writ, or as though the theories of the geologists were as solid as their rocks.

It is indeed a remarkable fact, and one which commends to our especial attention the feature of the gospel now contemplated, that in an age when science, as connected with general laws, was unknown, the gospel should have been based upon that very feature in the character of God, his determined adherence to law, which lies at the foundation of natural science. The pardon of the gospel is not a setting aside of the law, nor a repeal of its penalty; but it is granted in compliance with a law higher and more general than that which was broken. It is for the purpose of this illustration, as if the law of the periodical time of the earth's rotation should be infringed, and its year prolonged a month by the approach of a new planet. Were such an infringement to take place without an apparent and adequate reason, it would unsettle the foundations of Astronomy. But when the planet is seen to hold such a position as it ought, in order to retard the earth, and the less general law of the earth's time of revolution gives way to the more general one of gravitation, the foundations of astronomy remain untouched, and its fundamental law is confirmed and honored. Now in the eyes of all heaven Christ has done that in relation to the pardon of sinners which in the case supposed the appearance of the new body would do in the eyes of an astronomer—has furnished a reason why that pardon should be granted, a principle on which it takes place, so that the law remains in all its integrity, and the sword of justice in the hand of the eternal God glitters as brightly as ever, or rather, since the death of Christ, seems to cast an intenser light. If then the moral kingdom of God is thus in all its departments governed by general laws, shall it be less salutary and ennobling to the mind to understand these, than to understand the general laws of the physical universe, the discovery and comprehension of which has always been esteemed the mark of an enlarged mind, and is often among the highest achievements of genius?

But we should wrong the tendency of the gospel to liberalize the mind, if we were to represent it as adapted to give us command only over a system of truth, running parallel indeed with others, but disconnected with them. The great systems of physical and moral truth are not disconnected, and were it only for the purpose of illustration, it would behoove the preacher to be familiar with the fields of science. They have indeed been studied as separate, just as the arterial and venous systems in the human body were once studied as separate; but it will yet be seen that it is in the moral portion of this universe that the pulse of its life throbs, and that it is from its connection with this that the rest derives its vitality and importance. In the earlier stages of society these sciences, like the different tribes of men, were supposed to be rivals of each other; but as it has been found that there is a brotherhood of man over the whole earth, and that the prosperity of one

nation is the best means of securing that of the rest, so it has been found that the sciences are all of one family, and that the advancement of one has an immediate effect upon that of others, and this has promoted a spirit of liberality and co-operation among scientific men. Into this circle and brotherhood, however, it seems not to have been thought that religion had a claim to enter. It has been supposed to have its own place, and its own claims, and its own modes of investigation. But every thing now seems to indicate that there is an immense intellectual and moral universe corresponding in extent and variety to the physical universe, and that these are linked together by numberless relations so as to form but one whole. That there must be this unity, thoughtful men have long been satisfied, and the present is a period of eager expectation for its more full recognition. It is like that period in the history of electricity, when philosophers were watching for the link that should bind the electrical phenomena of the earth and the heavens together. Or like that period which now again recurs in the history of the same science in its connection with magnetism and light and caloric; when the phenomena of all of them seem to indicate some central point of radiation by their connection with which they may be severally embraced under the same general law, and be set as a single gem in the diadem of science. It is to this point that the eyes of the student are now turned. This is the next step to be taken. Rising from different and distant sources, science and religion are like two mighty rivers, sometimes seeming to run in opposite directions, but yet tending to empty their waters at the same point, into the same ocean. Already are they seen to approach each other; words of friendly salutation are exchanged across the isthmus which yet divides them, and the pennons which gleam from the vessels of those who float upon their surface are found to contain mottoes of similar import. On the one I see it is wrttten, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty;" and on the other, "Just and true are thy ways, O thou king of saints;" and when these two currents shall unite, then there shall go up from the blended multitude, as the sound of many waters, the one undivided song of Moses and the Lamb.

XVIII.—ON A MINISTER'S QUALIFYING HIMSELF FOR HIS OFFICE, &c

BY THE REV. R. CECIL, M. A

When a young minister sets out, he should sit down and ask himself how he may best qualify himself for his office.

How does a physician qualify himself? It is not enough that he offers to feel the pulse. He must read, and inquire, and observe, and make experiments, and correct himself again and again. He must lay in a stock of medical knowledge before he begins to feel the pulse.

The minister is a physician of a far higher order. He has a vast field before him. He has to study an infinite variety of constitutions. He is to furnish himself with the knowledge of the whole system of remedies. He is to be a man of skill and expedient. If one thing fail, he must know how to apply another. Many intricate and perplexed cases will come before him: it will be disgraceful to him not to be prepared for such. His patients will put many questions to him: it will be disgraceful to him not to be prepared to answer them. He is a merchant embarking in extensive concerns. A little ready money in the pocket will not answer the demands that will be made upon him. Some of us seem to think it will, but they are grossly deceived. There must be a well-furnished account at the banker's.

But it is not all gold that glitters. A young minister must learn to separate and select his materials. A man who talks to himself will find out what suits the heart of man: some things respond; they ring again. Nothing of this nature is lost on mankind; it is worth its weight in gold, for the service of a minister. He must remark, too, what it is that puzzles and distracts the mind: all this is to be avoided; it may wear the garb of deep research, and great acumen, and extensive learning; but it is nothing to the mass of mankind.

One of the most important considerations in making a sermon, is to disembarrass it as much as possible. The sermons of the last century were like their large unwieldy chairs. Men have now a far more true idea of a chair. They consider it as a piece of furniture to sit upon, and they cut away from it every thing that embarrasses and encumbers it. It requires as much

reflection and wisdom to know what is not to be put into a sermon as what is.

He should become a philosopher also. He should make experiments on himself and others, in order to find out what will produce effect. He is a fisherman, and the fisherman must fit himself to his employment. If some fish will bite only by day, he must fish by day; if others will bite only by moonlight, he must fish for them by moonlight. He has an engine to work, and it must be his most assiduous endeavor to work his engine to the full extent of its powers; and to find out its powers, is the first step towards success and effect.

But all the minister's efforts will be vanity, or worse than vanity, if he have not unction. Unction must come down from heaven, and spread a savor, and relish, and feeling over his ministry. And, among all the other means of qualifying himself for his office, the Bible must hold the first place, and the last also must be given to the word of God and prayer.

Some men set up exorbitant notions about accuracy; but exquisite accuracy is totally lost on mankind. The greater part of those who hear, cannot be brought to see the points of the accurate man. The scriptures are not written in this manner. I should advise a young minister to break through all such cobwebs as these unphilosophical men would spin round him. An humble and modest man is silenced, if he sees one of these critics before him. He should say, "I am God's servant; to my own master I stand or fall; I will labor according to the utmost ability which God giveth, and leave all consequences to him."

We are especially taught in the New Testament to glorify the Spirit of God; and, in his gracious operations in our ministry, we are nearer the apostolic times than we often think ourselves.

But this assistance is to be expected by us, as laborers in the vineyard; not as rhapsodists. Idle men may be pointed out, who have abused the doctrine of divine assistance; but what has not been abused? We must expect a special blessing to accompany the truth; not to supersede labor, but to rest on and accompany labor.

A minister should satisfy himself in saying, "It matters not what men think of my talents: am I doing what I can?" For there is great encouragement in that commendation of our Lord's, "She hath done what she could."

I have been cured of expecting the Holy Spirit's influence without due preparation on our part, by observing how men preach who take up that error. I have heard such men talk nonsense by the hour.

We must combine Luther with St. Paul —*benè orasse est benè studuisse*, must be united with St. Paul's, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." One errs who says, I will preach a reputable sermon; and another errs who says, I will leave all to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, while he has neglected a diligent preparation.

ESSAYS

ON THE

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFICIENT MINISTRY.

I.—PERSONAL PIETY.

BY THE REV. JOHN ANGELL JAMES.

ACCUSTOMED as we are to treat religion as a science to be theoretically investigated—an object of controversy, to be polemically defended, we are in danger, without great watchfulness, of merging the Christian in the divine; and, after all, he makes but a poor divine, as to any practical effect, who is but a lukewarm Christian. "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips." "It is from the pastor's defects, considered in the light of a disciple, that his principal difficulties and dangers arise." Do not, my dear brother, as many have done, mistake gifts for grace, and judge of the real state of your own personal piety by your readiness in thinking and speaking upon holy things. No man is in greater danger of self-deception, as to the real state of his own heart, than he who has to deal officially with the hearts of others. This will require the exercise of incessant vigilance, close inspection, and keen discrimination in the closet, where I hope you will spend no inconsiderable portion of your time. Here I cannot conceal my apprehension, that as in many other respects, so especially in vital godliness and a devoted spirit, the present race of Christian ministers come far behind their predecessors. It has occurred to other and older men than myself, that in many who of late years have entered into the pastoral office, a very considerable defect of serious and spiritual feeling is lamentably obvious. There is a frivolity of deportment which, though far removed from every thing immoral, appears as if they wished to conciliate the affections of their people, rather in the light of cheerful companions in the parlor, than as faithful preachers in the pulpit; and as if they sought to render themselves more attractive, by displacing the holy seriousness of the ministerial character, in order to make way for a little nearer approximation to the man of fashion and the world. It would be a circumstance to be deplored in tears of blood, if our ministers should extensively lose the spirit of vital piety; for, as they give the tone to their congregations, it would soon be followed by a general resemblance of our flocks to the palsied interests of the church at Laodicea. The principles of dissent, although they have no indirect connection with a spirit of inquiry, and the cause of genuine liberty, derive their chief value from the influence which they exert upon the interests of experimental religion; and when they cease by any cause to exert that influence, their value is depreciated, their importance diminished, their glory is departed. Let us look to the fathers of dissent—to the illustrious Nonconformists, not as authorities to bind our conscience, but as examples to stimulate our diligence, and especially our diligence as men of God. The ponderous volumes of their learning and divinity do not contain so much to confound us, as the diaries of their religious experience. One page of Philip Henry's life makes one blush more than all the folios of his son Matthew's peerless exposition.

Attend then, my brother, to the state of religion in your own heart. Seek to have

all your intellectual attainments consecrated by a proportionate growth in grace. Let not your knowledge spread over the upper regions of the soul, like the aurora borealis over the face of a wintry sky, while the world spreads out below, cold, cheerless, and dark; but let it resemble the orb of day, which warms and quickens the earth at the time he gilds and glorifies the heaven. Endeavor to feel more yourself of all that is involved in genuine religion. Feel more, and you will speak better. All men are orators when they feel. The language of the heart has an unction and an energy —especially a heart that borrows its feelings from all that is eternal—which no elegance or sublimity of composition can reach, and which is more resistless than the thunders of Demosthenes, or the vivid lightnings which flashed from the genius of Cicero.

II.—PERSONAL PIETY.

BY THE REV. EDWARD GRINDROD.

Let me remind you that there can be no true piety without a previous scriptural conversion. No service which you can render to God will be accepted by him whilst you are under guilt and condemnation; nor can you render acceptable obedience to his holy law without a new nature; that law must be written on your hearts. A mere external reformation is not sufficient; the change of which I speak is a moral, universal, spiritual change; a change of the principles, of the mind, of the affections, of the heart, of the conduct, and of the life, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and obtained by faith in Jesus Christ. This change is so indispensably necessary, that he who connects himself with the church of Jesus Christ without any respect to it, is described as one who "entereth not in by the door, but climbeth up some other way;" and is denounced as "a thief and a robber." Every unconverted minister is an intruder into the sacred office; and to all such the great Head of the church will say at the last day, "What hadst thou to do to tread my courts?"

My brethren, the dignity of your office as ministers does not discharge you from all the obligations to personal holiness; but it binds these obligations upon you with superadded weight and force. That you have to teach Christianity to others is an irresistible reason why you should experience and practise it yourselves. It is for you, especially, to strive to be deeply, habitually pious. Strive not to excel in one Christian grace or virtue alone, nor in one class of virtues; but strive to excel in every grace of God's Holy Spirit. Be men of integrity in all your ways; but let your integrity be associated with the charity which "hopeth all things." Cultivate a devotional spirit, but let it not be marred by mysticism, or by enthusiasm, properly so called. Be clothed with humility as with a garment; but let there be nothing mean or little in your conduct. Be grave and serious; but be not melancholy or morose. Be cheerful; but take care that your cheerfulness never degenerates into levity. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," and any charity not included in this enumeration; copy all these things into your own lives and examples.

The piety of some ministers has serious blemishes in it, against which you would do well sacredly to guard yourselves. There is in some in the sacred office the semblance of *envy;* and this appears in the uneasiness which they evince when they hear another praised, or mentioned in their presence; and in their efforts to detract from the merited commendation of their brethren in the ministry. Envy is the vice of little minds. When you envy another you acknowledge your own inferiority; and when envy produces its corresponding fruits, it makes a man appear little and mean. I repeat it—this is a vice of little minds, of low minds. My experience has taught me that, generally speaking, they whose gifts are the smallest have the most to say against others. The weakest minister I ever knew (I do not say he was a minister in connection with us) was the worst to please with the ministry of others, and was seldom or never heard to speak in commendation of his brethren in the sacred office. What! is love to ministers so common a virtue, that you should do any thing to diminish its influence? Are the hearers of the gospel, or the members of the church, so readily disposed to give due honor to the ministers of Christ,

that any one of their own order can ever be found doing any thing to disseminate a prejudice against his brethren?

There is in some ministers a disposition *to retail slanders*. Let it have no existence in your hearts. Guard yourselves against this. Remember that excellent maxim of your ministerial economy, "Speak evil of no man," else your word will "eat as doth a canker." Take care that your piety be not blemished by lightness of behavior. Remember, wherever you are, that you are ministers of Christ; and suffer not yourselves to be betrayed into any action which would not sustain that high dignity. Aim at superior degrees of piety. You ought to do this as examples to the flock of Christ, over which the Lord has made you overseers. Set before you the best patterns of piety. Labor to be like *Caleb*, the son of Jephunneh, who was of "another spirit" from the timid spies, and followed the Lord fully. Strive to be like *Joshua*, who resolved, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Like *Elisha*, who was to the Israelites as chariots and horsemen of fire, for protection and defence. Like *Daniel*, who cheerfully abandoned princely honor, and exposed himself to the most terrible deaths, for the sake of a good conscience. Like *Paul*, who "counted not his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy."

In order to your personal piety, it will be necessary that *every day you renew your acts of dedication to God*. Never for one day forget the transactions of last evening. The vows of the Lord are upon you, and you will incur an awful guilt if you are not men devoted to God. You are now set apart for the service of God, and you cannot innocently depart from the office committed to you; nor can you, without guilt, act in any way inconsistent with that solemn character.

III.—EMINENT MINISTERIAL PIETY.

BY THE REV. J. B. INNES.

But allow me to combine my congratulations with warnings and advice. Let me remind you of the eminent degree of religion which is now required of you. Hitherto you have watched over your own spirit with a *personal*—now you are to watch with a *public* reference. Hitherto you have been working out *your own* salvation with fear and trembling—now, with regard to *others*, you are to be a worker together with God; and in both references are to "keep your heart with all diligence." Now you are to take heed unto yourself, and unto the doctrine, to continue in them, and in doing this you shall both "save thyself and them that hear thee." Now you are not only to shine as a lamp in the sanctuary, but to aim that your heart be an altar where that celestial fire is burning which is designed to ignite the censers of the church, before they are carried by the high-priest of our profession into the holy of holies. Your feelings will give a character to the devotional services of others. If you are dull, that dulness will pall an assembly; if you are lively, that life will vivify a Christian community. Now you are not only to maintain a consistency of Christian character for your own sake, but as "an *example* to the flock." Forget not that what you are, to a certain extent, your hearers are likely to become. In this view, in a minister there can be nothing unimportant. In his general deportment, in his dress, in the minutiæ of his character, he is the object of notice, and often of imitation. In his private intercourse, he may counteract all the effects of his public labors. He may reason like a Howe, or pour out strains of eloquence like a Hall, and yet if the taunt be applicable, "Physician, heal thyself," he will fail either to convince or to persuade. He may, on the Sabbath, scatter the seed of the word over the whole plantation, and in the course of the week go from one division of it to another, and by a frivolous conversation, and a worldliness of spirit, sow the tares which will choke the plants, or the poisons which will kill them; or by a wise deportment, "by pureness, by knowledge, by a holy spirit, by faith unfeigned," he may prove like a dew from the Lord; and a scene of fertility, the answer to his fervent prayers, will bless his eyes and cheer his heart.

Thus, my brother, may grace, mercy, and peace be with *you*; thus may *you* adorn, recommend, and diffuse the gospel which you preach. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

IV.—SPIRITUAL GRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

BY THE REV. W. B. COLLYER, D. D.

"But thou, O man of God! follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness; fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." You may infer the difficulty of your calling, my brother, from the many and important qualities which are here stated as essential to the right discharge of your duty.

Justice.—You will sometimes be called upon to judge of character; and the religion which requires the exercise of charity cannot dispense with the principle of justice. Others may be actuated by malevolence, or disturbed by envy, and slander their neighbors, or the members of the Christian society to which they belong. You must separate every cause from passion, and distinguish the coloring of slander and prejudice from the features of truth. You will also endeavor to conduct yourself impartially and affectionately towards your people, not suffering private considerations to influence your feelings or your conduct. *Holiness.*—Are you the ensample to the flock? With what jealousy should you watch over your own heart! Sin carries in the minister of the sanctuary an enhanced guilt, and calls for a greater punishment, because of the publicity of his station, and the force of his example. The smallest indulgence on his part is considered by others as giving license to the most unqualified abandonment of themselves to evil; and the bitterest regrets, the most earnest exhortations, avail little to counteract the sanction which one imprudent moment gave to the levity and corruption of the human heart. *Faith.*—To preach a gospel, the principles of which have no hold upon your own heart, would, indeed, be unavailing. To you your hearers will look for an example of courage in danger, magnanimity in distress, submission in bereavement, a hope full of immortality in the prospect of death, a mind above the world as you pass through it. These are the fruits of faith, and it is necessary to possess the principle in order to present an example so illustrious. By it the weak will be strengthened, the fearful encouraged, the wavering confirmed, and the afflicted comforted. *Tenderness.*—If a heathen could say, "I am a man, and nothing human is foreign to my heart," what are those holy sympathies which a Christian minister should cherish towards his brethren? They collect and blend all the charities of humanity. The affection of a parent—of a brother; the combined emotions of friendship and of nature, form ministerial tenderness. It must be fervent, faithful, pure, unwearied; in short, look at your duty in the example of your Master, of whom it was predicted, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom; and shall gently lead those that are with young." It was proclaimed in his name, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,"—and he could add in his pilgrimage—"this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Should not his ministers be such as can have compassion on the ignorant, and on those that are out of the way? Should they not exhibit a character of uniform tenderness? *Patience.*—You must not resign that as lost which is delayed. How long may public usefulness be concealed! Not until this day, when I learned it from your lips, my brother, did I know that some sermons to young persons, preached by me, had promoted your spiritual welfare, and been the means of introducing yourself and three others into the ministry. I was ignorant of this circumstance fourteen years; and let this fact, produced by yourself this day, be a future encouragement to you not to consider your usefulness as limited by your information. The reflection that you do good beyond your knowledge, will enable you to bear with the indifference of some, and the ignorance of others; and to repeat truths which seem to be slowly received, if not altogether disregarded. He who instructs children must be content to place before them the word, without anger, the twentieth time, which he has explained nineteen times in vain; and he who will win souls to God must possess his own spirit in patience, and manifest that patience by *perseverance*. The one relates to the temper of your

preaching—the other to the constancy of it. The one will divest it of petulance—the other will apply it without weariness. Both of these qualities are necessary to your work; and as they are both graces of the Spirit, you must labor in perpetual dependence upon him, with earnest prayer for heir bestowment. *Meekness.*—If it be unquestionably true, that whatever talent a man may possess, and however his mind may be enriched with intellectual endowments, if he is cursed with a heart which cannot feel, or distinguished by an unrelenting character, he is totally disqualified for the ministerial office, and wholly unable to meet its obligations and discharge its duties—it is no less certain, that a professor destitute of the grace of humility, and uninfluenced by a spirit of meekness, is not a Christian. I am aware how many must be condemned by this rule, and I am the more anxious that you should be established by it. To ministers especially the Saviour speaks when he says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart."

Having glanced at those graces which the apostle has enumerated as essential to your work, separately, allow me further to observe, that it is of great importance they should be combined, and that each of them should have its due influence. These are the component parts of the pastor's character. Each of them will be needed and exercised in your ministerial career; and the want of this *whole* interrupts public usefulness. Some have talents, but they are adulterated by pride; some have humility, but they want temper; some have wisdom without energy; some have zeal without knowledge; some are faithful, but not tender; some are affectionate, but not patient; some present a constellation of graces, but obscure them by indolence; and others are eminent for intellectual powers, but degrade them by levity, or stain them with impurity. Ah, sir, not one of these graces must be wanting, if you would "keep this commandment," and accomplish your ministry. Take one color from the rainbow, and its beauty is marred; take one link from a chain, and its connection is broken; take one stone from the building, and its strength is diminished, its harmony destroyed, its stability endangered; take one of these graces from the pastoral character, and it is incomplete.

V.—ON MINISTERIAL HUMILITY

BY THE REV. O. WINSLOW.

A GROWING humbleness of mind is an attribute in the formation of an elevated standard of ministerial holiness and efficiency, too essential and important to be overlooked. Where is the spiritual minister of Christ, who has not detected the latent existence, and who has not had to struggle against the secret workings of the sin of *pride?* It is so insidious and powerful a sin, and withal is so freed from the vulgar and unrefined feelings of our nature—is so peculiarly intellectual in its character, and exhilarating in the sensations it produces, that few are more liable to be enamored of its fair exterior, and ensnared by its specious and seductive form, than the minister of the gospel. And yet an evil more calculated to feed as a cankerworm at the root of his ministry—a sin more loathed of God—against which his denunciations are more severely recorded, or on which his wrath has more signally and fearfully fallen—is not found to exist. It originated the first form of evil that ever existed; it constitutes, at this moment, the great centre of rebellion against God on earth; and to it, as their primal source, may be traced all the errors, heresies, and schisms that have ever agitated, and torn, and divided the Christian church. Thus, the identical sin which we find to form so impregnable a strong hold of Satan in the hearts of the unregenerate, and which has so sadly wounded the peace, retarded the prosperity, and deformed the beauty of Christ's church, is the sin most rife in our own bosoms!

Its classifications are many. Among them may be specified, the pride of office—the pride of denomination—the pride of knowledge—the pride of talent—the pride of scholarship—the pride of opinion—the pride of influence—the pride of orthodoxy—the pride of controversy—the pride of eloquence—the pride of pulpit—the pride of platform—the pride of success, and the pride of applause. It is a Protean evil, assuming a thousand varied and opposite forms. It will insinuate itself into the most spiritual and solemn of our services. There is no soil so holy in which its root will not strike; there is no employment so sacred on which it will not engraft itself. It will even make the cross of Christ a pedestal on which to erect its deformed visage. Yea,

while exalting Jesus, we may be found but exalting ourselves; and while exclaiming "Behold the Lamb of God!" we may be but veiling his true glory behind our insignificant persons; virtually exclaiming, "Behold my talents, my eloquence, and my zeal!" Is there not in us, my brethren, a manifest deficiency of the lowly, self-annihilating spirit of the divine Master whom we serve, and whom it should be our aim and glory to resemble? In maintaining our position in the church, in protecting our prerogatives, in asserting our principles, and in vindicating and fencing controverted positions, may there not be a lofty mein, an air of self-sufficiency and importance, utterly at variance with the "mind that was in Christ Jesus?" Is there not an unholy ostentation, and a desire for publicity in much that we do for Christ? Is there not an eagerness for preferment to influential and wealthy churches—a fondness for conspicuousness of place—a shrinking from fields of labor, where no laurels are to be won—from posts of responsibility, because they are not good enough for us—and from spheres of usefulness, because the aspect they present is discouraging, and the labor they demand will be arduous, difficult, and self-denying? Is there not a thirsting for human applause, a studied aim after popularity, a trimming policy designed to please the world, a trumpeting of our own fame, and a vaunting parade of our own success? Instead of inquiring—"Who shall be most lowly, most like Christ, the least in the kingdom?"—is it not—"Who shall be the greatest? who shall stand upon the highest pinnacle of the temple?" And is there not, among those who possess the advantages of intellectual training, who have gone into the ministry from the halls of literature and science, enriched with their treasures, and flushed with their honors; a liability to look down, with an eye of supercilious disdain, upon their seniors and compeers in the ministry, the holy and humble, but self-taught, men of the church? Are we not, in many, or in all these points, verily guilty before our God? Has not the cherishing of this sin deeply grieved the Spirit? and may it not supply the real secret of our barren souls, our inefficacious ministry, our languishing churches, our paralyzed efforts, the sad but certain consequences of our accursed pride?

But an efficient ministry is a holy ministry, and a holy ministry is an *humble* ministry; it is "*clothed* with humility." As a rich and ample robe, this rare grace of the Spirit envelops the entire man, veiling his intellectual powers, his varied acquirements, his self-denying and successful labors, from the too intense and admiring gaze of the human eye; and presenting to view only those features which stamp the emptiness and nothingness of the creature, while God is glorified and praised.

And yet how much is there, if soberly and frequently pondered, calculated to abase our pride, to repress the aspirings of vanity, to rebuke our self-adulation, and to lay us "low in a low place!" That God should have deposited the heavenly treasure of his gospel in such poor, earthen vessels as we; that he should have summoned *us*, perhaps, from some humble and retired walk of life, to the great public work of preaching Christ; that he should have vouchsafed to such feeble and unholy instruments any measure of success; that, after all our schooling for the work, and our actual experience in it, our real spiritual acquaintance with divine things is so limited, our knowledge of divine truth so imperfect, and our experience of its sanctifying power in our own souls so faint, that many who sit at our feet, and receive the word from our lips, are more deeply taught of the Spirit, more perfectly matured in grace, and walk more humbly with God and near to Christ, than we their appointed teachers; that the secret motives which move upon our hearts and prompt us to action, are often found to be utterly beneath our character, our calling, and our professed aim; that if any power has ever accompanied the word we have preached, and souls through our instrumentality have been converted, and the saints of God edified, the "excellency of that power was of God and not of us;" surely these considerations are calculated to make us little in our own eyes, to silence our empty boastings, and "stain the pride" of our vain-glory. But, oh! a sight of a crucified Christ will more effectually mortify this principle, and check this spirit of pride in our hearts, than the combined influence of all the motives that we have urged. Standing beneath the cross of the incarnate God, in view of that stupendous spectacle—the humiliation of Deity!—beholding the Creator of all worlds, descend-

ing from the heights of infinite glory to the lowest depths of human abasement, exclaiming, as he sinks, "I am a worm and no man!"—the Eternal Spirit unveiling this scene to the eye of faith, and imparting a close spiritual apprehension of it to the mind,—how is the high look brought down, and the lofty thought laid low! How does the soul sink before the cross, covered with shame and confusion of face at the clear discovery, the awful character, and the deep conviction of its sin—the sin of self-exaltation while setting forth the person, work, glory, and humiliation of the Son of God! "Hateful and hated sin!" does he exclaim, "that ever, Lord, I should have cherished one low thought of thee, one high thought of myself!—that ever I should have plucked the crown from thy head and placed it on my own!—that ever, in setting forth thine infinite glory, thy deep abasement and sufferings, I should have turned it into an occasion of pride and self-exaltation! Oh, wretched man that I am! Lord, canst thou, dost thou, forgive me? Never, never, can I forgive myself!"

Such is the effect which an eye resting upon the cross of the incarnate God produces! Oh, brethren, for the keen sense of our personal vileness, which drew the humiliating confession from the heart of the prophet, as the heavenly vision faded from his view, "Wo is me! for I am unclean; because I am a man of unclean lips!" Oh for the self-abasing, Christ-exalting spirit of the evangelist, when he exclaimed to the multitudes who thronged his ministrations, "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose!" "He must increase, but I must decrease." Oh for the self-crucifixion of the apostle, when he addressed his epistle to the Corinthian church, and declared, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God!" "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!" But beyond all human examples of self-renunciation, oh for the Spirit of him who said, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart!" In this school, and at the feet of this Teacher, must we be taught, if ever the Lord puts any honor upon us in the successful ministrations of his truth. Here, and in this posture, we shall learn our utter impotence and insignificance; here we may search our hearts, sift our principles, scan our motives, discipline our minds, and get our affections absorbed in holy, ardent, and constraining love to God and to Christ, to the ministry and to souls.

VI.—MINISTERIAL SERIOUSNESS.

BY THE REV. H. HUMPHREY, D. D., PRESIDENT OF AMHERST COLLEGE, U. S.

In all your preaching be deeply *serious*. What can be more entirely out of place, what can be more disgusting, more irreverent, than *levity* in the pulpit. Terribly, but most deservedly has the great Christian poet rebuked this glaring impropriety. Familiar as the passage must be to everybody, I cannot refrain from quoting it.

> "He that negotiates between God and man,
> As God's ambassador, the grand concerns
> Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
> Of lightness in his speech. 'Tis pitiful
> To court a grin, when you should woo a soul;
> To break a jest, when pity would inspire
> Pathetic exhortation; and to address
> The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
> When sent with God's commission to the heart.
> So did not Paul. Direct me to a quirk
> Or merry turn in all he ever wrote,
> And I consent you take it for your text,
> Your only one, till sides and benches fail."

But still I grieve to say, that the Christian heart is not seldom pained by levity of this sort in the sacred desk. The temptation to be witty and sarcastic easily besets some of the most popular preachers of almost every religious denomination. I have observed it, (very rarely, to be sure,) but I have noticed it in men whom I greatly revere and admire. But what can they be thinking of? Is there a solitary example in the Bible to justify it? The greatest and holiest of all preachers often excited the admiration of his friends and the hatred of his enemies by his pointed and powerful discourses: but did he ever make his disciples or the scribes and Pharisees laugh? It shocks one's feelings merely to ask the question. And is not Christ our great example in the pulpit, as well as out of it? If now we turn to the prophets and the apostles, which of them ever delivered a witty message, or preached a witty sermon? Did any of them make either the rulers of

the people, the Jews or the Gentiles, laugh under their preaching? Did Isaiah, did Jeremiah, did Paul, or Peter, or John? Never—never. They felt that their commission was a serious commission, that the Bible was a serious book. They knew that God was serious, that Christ was serious, that heaven was serious, that hell was serious; and how could they cherish any but the most serious feelings, or utter any but the most serious sentiments in their proper vocation of "praying sinners in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God?"

I know the apology which is sometimes offered, that it is as natural for some men to be sharp and witty, as it is to breathe. Very well—then let them keep out of the sacred profession. If they cannot restrain themselves in the pulpit, it is no place for them, whatever may be their talents, or even piety. What would a parent think, if at the funeral of his only son, his pastor should intentionally use some expression to make the people smile? But how much more reprehensible would it be, than if while that son was on trial for eternity the preceding Sabbath, and hundreds of others with him, the same pastor had made them all smile at some extravagant expression or witty remark in the course of his sermon? To avoid every appearance of levity in your preaching, and every incentive to it, you will often be obliged to change the word or phrase, which would most exactly express the idea you intend, for some other, not quite so appropriate, but far better befitting the time and the place. The man that cannot do this, and do it cheerfully, should betake himself to some other profession. It would no doubt be pushing this point to an unreasonable extreme, to say, that in no possible case can a preacher excite a smile over his congregation, without himself being to blame for it. A word or a sentence may have a very different effect from what he intended, and he may be grieved and mortified to witness it. But such cases will very rarely occur, and when they do they will serve to put him more effectually on his guard in future. I have no objection to a smile, to a hearty laugh, in its proper place. Man was made to laugh, as well as to weep; but not in the house of God; not under the dispensation of his word, not in "the gate of heaven." "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever."

VII.—ON AN EXCELLENT SPIRIT.

BY THE REV. E. PARSONS, LATE OF LEEDS.

A PROPHET of God, a minister of his sanctuary, should be a man of "an excellent spirit." The actual state and habitual frame of his mind must correspond with the official character he sustains, and with the peculiar obligations of that character. In him, above all other men, we look for holy principles and heavenly tempers; the wisdom of the serpent without his sting; the harmless, but not the "silly"* spirit of the dove, must be conspicuous in his deportment, or he will excite the displeasure of God, the alarm of the church, and the reproach of the world.

Daniel, among the Babylonians, steadfastly maintained the distinction and dignity of "an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile." Honored with extraordinary visions and revelations from heaven, he became the instrument of unfolding the mysterious occurrences of his own day, and of announcing the decreed events of future years and ages, as they stood connected with the final establishment and universal triumph of the kingdom of Christ. In the strength of his faith, the depth of his humility, the ardor of holy affections, in the power and triumph of the spirit of prayer, "there was none like Daniel." A man whose deportment was so correct, whose character was so pure, that the all-scrutinizing eye of malice could "find no error or fault in him." His only fault, even in the eyes of his most inveterate enemies, was his unshaken fidelity to the cause and glory of his God. When the interests of that cause, when the glory of that name were at stake, he could brave all danger, and endure all tribulation. And in this divine spirit, anticipating the rest and glory that should follow, he persevered in his prophetic labors, although exalted to the highest honors, and surrounded with the strongest temptations of the Babylonian court. You cannot study the characters of such men too closely, nor can you ever think you have imbibed enough of the excellent spirit by which their conduct was regulated.

Were I told that you were as orthodox as an angel, that you were as profoundly learned as the most celebrated sages of an-

* Hosea vii. 11.

cient or modern times, that you were the most insinuating, captivating, and irresistible orator, that you were the most admired and popular preacher of your own or any other country, with whatever attention I might listen to such eulogium, and however convinced of its propriety, I should still ask—But what is his spirit? What is his temper? Does he tread in the steps, does he exemplify the all-attractive spirit of his divine Master? If not, my soul should have no pleasure in him. Thus would I interrogate, thus would I decide. For "though we could speak with the tongues of angels, though we had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries, and all knowledge, we become as the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal," we are nothing without a meek, a lowly, and affectionate spirit; nothing in the estimation of God, and possess no genuine excellence of character as the disciples of Christ.

With such views and feelings, how can I better discharge the interesting duty to which you have called me, than by exhorting you, in language of the highest authority, to "know what manner of spirit you are of," and sedulously to cultivate that excellence of spirit and temper which will constitute the brightest ornament of your office, and prove the best security of your usefulness.

Of Daniel it is recorded, that "light, and understanding, and excellent wisdom was found in him." And of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Daniel was a type, it was predicted that "the spirit of wisdom and understanding should rest upon him." Called "to minister to the heirs of his salvation," the same spirit must, in some visible degree, rest upon you, and having received the "spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him," you will grow in grace, and in the knowledge of his character, truth, government, fulness, and glory. By reading and study, by observation and conversation, by meditation and prayer, every day will be crowned with some new mental acquisition and spiritual enjoyment, and "your path shall be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

A man of sound common sense, whose mind is habitually healthy, who is illuminated by divine grace, and who applies himself as he ought to the appointed means of improvement, can never become stationary in any determinable degree of intellectual qualification for the service and fruition of God. Then strive, my young friend, strive to excel; not to excel your brethren in exciting the greatest share of human applause, but strive to excel yourself in the daily augmentation of your spiritual treasures. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," and never rest in present attainments.

And remember, that your progressive improvement in divine wisdom and understanding most essentially depend upon the "spirit of faith." An unbeliever may preach the gospel—may preach the gospel with some effect; and so far as animal passion is operative, he may preach with animation and pleasure; but to enjoy fellowship with God, and to be endowed with increasing power to promote his glory, there must be a cordial reception of all his precious doctrines, and a fiducial reliance upon the truth of those doctrines, as the immutable foundation of your own eternal hopes. Before you can preach "the whole counsel of God," with divine liberty and energy, you must receive it, not merely as a system which deserves your credence, but as the object of your supreme affection, delight, and glorying. And while your faith embraces a whole gospel, your ministry will betray none of that culpable partiality for some doctrines at the expense of others, so prevalent in many who consider themselves as very high believers. Every link in the chain of our salvation, is essential to its perfection, and the purposes for which it was originally formed. Whatever may be the errors and defects of human systems, called religious; with whatever indifference we treat questions of church discipline, and modes, and forms of worship; we dare not say that there is any thing in the gospel which can properly be denominated non-essential.

The faith that is of the Spirit of God, adheres to all the doctrines of the gospel, cheerfully obeys its precepts, and derives strength and consolation from trust in its promises. Endowed with this "excellent spirit," what peace, what happiness will be yours! The approving testimony of heaven will accompany your progress through your present state of probation; the blessing of heaven will succeed your plans of usefulness and labors of love; the sanctifying influence of heaven will secure higher degrees of illumination, of spirituality, of liberty

and joy in religious exercises, will carry you forward with a calm mind, and a dignified character, through the various conflicts and afflictions of life, and will open to your view the all-animating prospect of a peaceful death and a blessed immortality.

Believing, and living by the faith of the Son of God, as an expectant of his glory, you will experience and exemplify the value of a devotional spirit. I shall here speak generally, because there are some things included under this head, which, for obvious reasons, must be kept distinct. A devotional spirit must be sincere, serious, spiritual, lively, and ardent in the contemplation and pursuit of heavenly objects. Filial reverence of the divine majesty—humble and joyful confidence in his mercy—delight in the moral beauties of his character—a genuine sense of obligation to his discriminating grace—union of soul, and fellowship with his church in the administration of his ordinances—a mind absorbed in concern for the extension of his empire in the world—and that scriptural anticipation of heaven which antedates the enjoyment of it;—these are some of the more prominent features of that state and frame of mind, which I beseech you to cultivate with intense application.

Habitual levity and carnality of mind, will invariably terminate in frigid indifference to the obligations and pleasures of religion, if not in total apostacy from its principles. For whatever may be the subsequent operations of apostacy, the rise of it must be sought in the secret deviations and vanity of the mind. This vanity in all its ramifications, "like the dead flies in the ointment of the apothecary," will infect the whole mass of your duties, till they become unspeakably offensive to that Spirit, which "must be worshipped in spirit and in truth." Then "keep thy heart—thy mind, with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." "Death and life," as Solomon says of the tongue, "are in the power of the mind." If your mind, your thoughts and affections, are alienated from the life of God, as a spiritual, a holy, and a happy life, a cold and deadly blast will rest upon you in your studies, in your preaching, and in all your pastoral obligations.

In this state, such obligations must prove the worst and most painful drudgery upon earth, and will therefore either be neglected, as far as may consist with the maintenance of public reputation, or will be attended to with inward disgust, and disgusting listlessness. What the soul is to the body, that the spirit of devotion is to a profession of religion, above all to the pastoral office. It is the life and glory of both.

VIII.—SIMPLICITY OF PURPOSE.

BY THE REV. A. REED, D. D.

CONTINUE thou in the things which thou hast learned." The things which we are here said to "have learned," are the things relating to our ministry; and the apostle, by exhorting Timothy to "continue in them," evidently directs him still to regard them with *simplicity of purpose*.

Whatever is new in religion is false. The elements of our salvation, like the elements of our being, are simple in their kind, easy of access, and few in number. Our sagacity is not to be flattered, our labors are not to be stimulated, by the hope of important discovery. We are not to seek an additional revelation; we are to present to our own attention, and that of others, the truths already revealed, with "singleness of heart." But the mind is proverbially fond of novelties; it, therefore, requires considerable discipline to reduce it to the terms of our ministry. There is in revealed truth something too simple and too obsolete for its taste. If dull, the mind settles down into a comparative indifference to objects it has so long contemplated; if restless, it busies itself in surrounding it with strange and meretricious attributes. The truth is plain, and men would beautify it; the truth is naked, and men would clothe it; the truth is weak, and men would protect it; the truth is poor, and men would enrich it. In the ardent pursuit of these sickly speculations, the truth is too often forsaken and lost; or if retained, it is preserved, like the ancient mummy, imprisoned in its dressings, and whose voice we are no more to hear—whose loveliness we are no more to behold.

We are to beware of this iniquity of the heart; we are to suppress those disgusts which spring from the vice and weakness of the mind towards the simplicity of truth, and the simplicity of those institutions by which it is best represented. We must not

bring down the majesty of truth to our tastes, but elevate our tastes to its majesty; we must revert to original principles and impressions. As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so we must walk in him, So we must teach him. By an habitual recurrence to those periods in which the great objects of religion filled the whole sphere of our vision, and engaged all the passions of the soul, we must seek to perpetuate the sensation and the joy.

It is often for want of this, that too many are obliged to look back on the early labors of their ministry for the chief proofs of success; whereas those proofs should be accumulating on our path at every step of our progress. We may have added considerably to our stores of knowledge, and practice may have given us skill in the use of them; but if, in making these acquirements, we have lost our warm attachments to the common truth, and our single and honest intention of honoring God alone, we shall be the worse and not the better qualified to labor for the salvation of the world. The winter's sun, though it shine with unwonted splendor, leaves the earth as barren as it found it; it is when its light is happily combined with its warmth, that all nature starts into life and fertility.

If ever there was a time in which caution on this subject was required, it is the present; if ever there was a place in which it was needful, it is in this metropolis. The elements of good and evil are abroad, and they are working everywhere, and powerfully. The instruments and means brought into this conflict are multiplied beyond all number, and are of every degree of comparison. The calls addressed to the pious and benevolent minister are made to him every hour of the day, and from every point of the compass. He sympathizes with them all; but it is manifest to obey them all is impossible. The attention is in danger of distraction, and the spirit is exposed to a useless and injurious excitement, by an endless variety of claims. Amidst clashing demands for service, we are in danger of standing still and doing nothing; or, borne away in the whirl and tumult which surrounds us, we are liable to lose all just government of our time, our talent, or ourselves; and, hasting from thing to hing, we may proffer our help everywhere, and give it effectually nowhere.

We are the more carefully to guard against this temptation, because it is supported by the suffrage of our natural vanity. There is something soothing in the supposition, that our countenance is indispensable to the success of every good work; we are unwilling that our name should be absent from any list of consideration and importance; and it is highly gratifying to show, that, if we cannot really be in many places at the same moment, we can visit them all in the smallest possible lapse of time, and can shed on a hundred different councils the glancing benefit of our presence and patronage. And this seduction is the more potent, because such attendances may be rendered without any considerable expenditure of physical or mental energy.

But as these services cost nothing, so they are worth nothing; and if we should be ensnared into such a course, to ourselves the worst of consequences would arise. The quiet claims of the closet, and of the study, would become insipid to us; the sphere of pastoral labor would present too small a theatre to exhibit our pretensions; the simple and primitive objects of the ministry would be neglected for many that are subordinate, and ultimately for some that are irrelevant. Religious institutions would be attended without regard to religious considerations. We should be always busy, and always idle. Cherished vanity might tell us of our usefulness; every other voice would pronounce us drivellers; and when, at last, we dropped out of the circle in which we had moved, men would feel that, instead of losing an auxiliary, they had been delivered from an encumbrance.

What then, it may be said, is to be done? Let us do whatever men may do, but let us not attempt more. Let us yield nothing to the suggestions of vanity, and every thing to the claims of ascertained duty. Let us set the great end of our ministry before us, and respect every object as it is related to them. As our occupations grow, let us look the more steadily to the simplicity of our motives and purposes. Like our Saviour, let us proportion devotional retirement to our public services. In the multitude of our thoughts within us, let one delight our spirit, and that the thought of God. In the multitude of our labors, let us aspire, with the simplicity and grandeur of the apostle, to say, "*This one thing I*

do!" Then, indeed, shall our "eye be single, and our whole body be full of light!"

IX.—MINISTERIAL IMITATION OF CHRIST.

BY THE REV. JAMES SHERMAN.

In some things you are not expected to imitate him. You are not required to work miracles, or attempt to fast forty days and nights; but there are some points in his demeanor which it will be your honor and happiness to imitate, and without which you will diminish your claim to the title of a good minister of Jesus Christ. I will not multiply them, but beg you to lay to heart three special peculiarities in his conduct.

Imitate him, then, *in the holiness of his character*. You are the representative of Christ to your people! or, as Paul states, "the glory of Christ." Oh! what manner of person ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Your own people will never rise up generally even to your standard of piety. If, therefore, your devotedness to Christ is partial—your self-denial slight—your temper irascible—your conversation trifling—what can you expect your people's to be? See then, dear brother, that you copy the conduct of your divine Master, and become "an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in spirit, in charity, in faith, in purity;" "in all things showing thyself a pattern of good works."

Imitate him also *in his improvement of opportunities*! How oft would he go where he knew there was some object of misery to be relieved! "He must needs go through Samaria,"—he must—it lay in the road to Galilee. Yes, but there was another "*must*;" a poor adulteress would come to the well to draw water, and "he must needs" seize the opportunity to tell her of her sin, and save her soul. So fully did he enter in the spirit of his work, that he forgot his meal. When the disciples returned from Sychar, whither they had gone to buy meat, seeing him probably exhausted with the fatigue of his journey, and affected with his conversation with the woman, they "prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of." To save a soul was more to him than food—sweeter than the most delicate repast. So let it be to you, dear brother. He went, too, at the call of all who needed his help or advice: to Peter's wife's mother, when sick of a fever—to the daughter of Jairus, when "she lay a dying," though only twelve years of age—to the servant of the centurion, who was sick, and ready to die. He was ready to bless children when their mothers brought them to him, and to expound his sermons more fully when the disciples entreated him. If invited to dine at the Pharisee's house, how the opportunity was improved to the advantage of all; if in the peaceful villa of Bethany, where he admitted the dear family to the intimacy of friendship, Mary is allowed to sit at his feet, and hear the precious words which proceed from his lips, while Martha is instructed in Christian duties, and encouraged to perform them in a Christian spirit. Oh, dear brother, all were the better for Christ's company; and if your spirit is alive to the honors, responsibilities, and duties of your office in every event, you will find some opportunity to magnify your Master, and bless the souls of your flock.

Imitate him also *in his strict attention to his proper work*. Your Master was always in his work. Many tempted him to engage in controversy; "Lord, are there few that shall be saved?" But to save their souls was of more importance in his view than to satisfy their curiosity; therefore he answered not their question, but exhorted them to "strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Some wished to make him a king; but when they made the attempt, he conveyed himself through the midst of them unseen, and went to a mountain, and communed with his Father, counting that greater honor than all the crowns mortals could bestow. Some would engage him in politics; "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or no?" but he would take no part in the angry discussions of political partisans, and answered them in piety and wisdom, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Some would occupy his time with speculative prophetic queries; "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" but his time was too precious, and the subject

too barren of practice or fruit, and therefore he dismisses it at once, with, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father hath put in his own power;" but let this suffice you to know, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." See, dear brother, nothing could divert him from his proper work. And allow me to advise you, and charge you, that you never needlessly engage in controversy—that you think very lightly of the compliments and honors the world may pay you or your ministry—that you enter not into the political arena, or the airy speculations of prophets and prophetesses of the present day. Oh! the proper work of the ministry will furnish you with enough to employ all your time, and all your energies. Satan will not care what you engage in, so that it is not your proper work. You may write notes on the classics, or hunt, or course, or edit a newspaper, or amuse a party with comic stories, or do any thing but aim to save souls, and extend the kingdom of Christ. Yet I have confidence in you, dear brother, that to all tempters who should induce you to descend from the lofty eminence of the spirit and employment of your office, you will say, as Nehemiah said, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?"

X.—IMPORTANCE OF A DEVOTIONAL SPIRIT.

BY THE REV. C. A. BIRT, A. M.

It will purify and temper your natural talents. Spirituality of mind refines and elevates the most ordinary talents, while it ennobles and invigorates those that are of the highest order. Piety is the soul of talent. Without its influence, knowledge puffeth up; but where its power is felt, all is to edification. Without piety, the most brilliant talents are but as meteors, which dazzle and astonish, but whose light is transitory and useless.

The graces of character, which ever attend habitual devotion, will give the essential weight of personal respect to your ministrations. Without this commendation, eloquence is a mere sound. The sabbath-day exhibitions of a minister whose piety is suspected, will be returned with that contempt which rests upon the hireling who thrusts himself into the priest's office for bread; or, at best, they will be returned as mere professional exertions, which, as displays of oratory, may amuse the mind, or excite the passions for a moment, but in which the preacher can never be more to his audience than as a lovely song, or as one that playeth well upon an instrument.

Ministerial success is identified with a spirit of devotion, because the gospel is propagated by a law of sympathy. It is not by mental power, but through the contagion of the heart, that ministers succeed in their work. "Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn," proceed from lips that have been touched with a live coal from off the altar of devotion; and the affections of men are open to receive his words, who speaks from the fulness of his heart. The power of the gospel rests in its unrivalled tenderness—that charm which touches the heart, and dissolves every feeling, in the mingled flow of contrition, humility, and delight. It is its ravishing sweetness, with which it overspreads the soul, that with gently stealing, but resistless influence, subdues all things unto itself, and causes us to feel that we are altogether won and captive before we are aware, or ever we have summoned up our powers of opposition. Men learn of Christ, because he is meek and lowly of heart. That minister is best qualified for usefulness, who, in communion with his Lord, has drunk deeply of that well-spring of love, which gushed forth from the heart of the Messiah, in every thought and action of the ministry which he fulfilled upon earth.

Giving yourselves continually unto prayer, you are brought under the promises of God, and armed with a divine power, in the assurance of the Spirit. How triumphant the confidence and energy which this faith begets! The promises cannot fail; they are more sure than the seasons, and we sow in hope. There is nothing too hard for the Lord, and the mountain of difficulty becomes a plain. When the Almighty puts forth his strength, the meanest instrument can do all things. The almond rod of Moses divides the mighty waters of th

deep Red Sea; the mantle of Elijah stays the course of Jordan's river; and the shadow of Peter heals the sick. What, then, shall not the gospel do, divinely constituted as it is, for the restoration of man? Oh! let the spirit of devotion burn in our pulpits; let our ministers give themselves continually unto prayer, and the early triumphs of the gospel shall be renewed. We shall act in the faith, and in the power of the apostles, who took the omnipotence of the Spirit as the fulcrum on which they rested the lever of the word, and moved the world.

XI.—ON A DEVOTIONAL SPIRIT.

BY THE REV. J. G. PIKE.

THE life of a Christian pastor should be eminently a life of prayer. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer."

1. Prayer is a sacred duty of every Christian, and a precious privilege. It is *essential* to spiritual life, and to growth in grace. Prayer is so much a duty, that religion cannot possibly exist in those by whom it is disregarded. As well might the body live without the soul, as any one live piously without prayer. The sun cannot shine, and give no light; a fountain cannot spring up, and send forth no stream; nor can religion exist in the heart, and not produce habitual prayer. Prayer thus incumbent as a duty, is also an invaluable privilege. Freedom of access to earthly monarchs is a privilege highly prized by worldly men. How much more valuable is freedom of access to the infinite Jehovah! Were he pleased to appoint that once in life, and only once, each of his servants should enjoy permission to approach the mercy-seat, and unfold all his wants; and were this single opportunity for communion with God to be appointed by a voice from heaven, how highly would the sacred interview be prized, and how eagerly desired! With what rapture would the direction be heard, "Now is your time for access to God; now go and tell him all your wants, and open all your heart!" Blessed be God! the privilege of prayer is not thus limited to a single opportunity, but may be enjoyed every day, every hour, and at any minute. How invaluable is such freedom of access to the God of love and glory!

2. Habitual prayer marks a state of mind peculiarly Christian. The Author of the gospel delights in lowly and humble dispositions. Prayer expresses the possession of such graces, and fosters their growth. A prayerful spirit breathes humility, indicates a sense of want, and acknowledges dependence upon God. On the contrary, the neglect of prayer invariably evinces the influence of pride, or carelessness, or self-ignorance, and generally of all these evils combined.

3. Prayer, which is thus the duty and privilege of every child of God, becomes from the nature of the Christian ministry a duty if possible more incumbent on the ministers of the gospel, and is to them a privilege more inestimable. Essential to spiritual life in every instance, in them it is more essential, if more can be. This has been felt by ministers of the most eminent piety and most distinguished usefulness. The remark of the great reformer Luther, has been often repeated, yet can scarcely be repeated too often, "Bene orasse est bene studuisse." The best instruction we gain on divine subjects is obtained in answer to prayer, and much of it not unfrequently in seasons of devotion. Then, at times, truth beams upon the mind, and is felt upon the heart, in a way more instructive and more impressive than at any other seasons. It is no longer dry theory, but living principle; so that Luther's words are literally true, and to have prayed fervently and solemnly is to have studied well. That eminent servant of God, Andrew Fuller, when delivering a funeral discourse for a departed fellow-laborer, not many months before his own departure, observed, "One of the sentences uttered by your deceased pastor, when drawing near his end, was, 'I wish I had prayed more.' This was one of those weighty sayings which are not unfrequently uttered in view of the solemn realities of eternity. This wish has often recurred to me since his departure, as equally applicable to myself; and with it the resolution of that holy man, president Edwards, so to live as he would wish he had when he came to die. In reviewing my own life, I wish I had prayed more than I have for the success of the gospel. I have seen enough to furnish me with matter of thankfulness, but had I prayed more, I might have seen more. I wish I had prayed more than I have for the

salvation of those about me, and who are given me in charge. When the father of 'the youth possessed by a demon' doubted whether Jesus could do any thing for him, he was told in answer, if he could believe, 'all things were possible.' On hearing this he burst into tears, saying, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!' He seems to have understood our Lord as suggesting, that if the child were not healed, it would not be owing to any want of power in him, but to his own unbelief. This might well cause him to weep and exclaim as he did. The thought of his unbelief causing the death of his child was distressing. The same thought has occurred to me as applicable to the neglect of the prayer of faith. Have I not by this guilty negligence been accessory to the destruction of some that are dear to me? And were I equally concerned for the souls of my connections, as he was for the life of his child, should I not weep with him? I wish I had prayed more than I have for my own soul. I might then have enjoyed much more communion with God. The gospel affords the same ground for spiritual enjoyment as it did to the first Christians. I wish I had prayed more than I have in all my undertakings. I might then have had my steps more directed by God, and with fewer deviations from his will. There is no intercourse with God without prayer. It is thus that we walk with God, and have our conversation in heaven."

4. Much prayer is requisite to strengthen the power of religion in your own heart. As a Christian you are commanded to forget the things that are behind, and reach unto those before; but whilst every Christian is obligated to display the graces of piety, these graces in the minister of the gospel should shine with brighter splendor; in him more elevated piety should appear embodied. This truth is taught in the sacred volume. Christian ministers are there represented as stars held in the Redeemer's hand. A star is all light; it possesses and diffuses light, and only light. Many eyes gaze upon its brightness, and many a benighted traveller is cheered and guided by its rays. Such should you be, a star in the Saviour's hand, diffusing in your whole example, as well as in your preaching, Christian light. Many eyes will be fixed upon you. Let them see in you what a Christian is. Let your whole deportment "hold forth the word of life," to direct others to him who is the true source of holiness and happiness.

XII.—THE MINISTRY A SPIRITUAL WORK.

BY THE REV. B. WILLS.

That work a minister is called to, is a work of a spiritual nature. It is the province of a physician to take care of the bodies of men, and it is the profession of a lawyer to defend their civil rights and properties, and secure their estates; but it is the proper work of a minister to watch for souls, as one that must give an account. The chief concern of a minister is with the spirits of men; these are the objects of our care, and the special charge we are intrusted with. It is our business to make earnest and repeated addresses to precious and immortal souls, in order to recover them from their degenerate state and woful apostacy, and to bring them back to God, the Father of spirits, the Source of their being and happiness, and the Centre of their eternal rest. It is the work of a pastor, or minister, to endeavor to get sinners renewed in the spirit of their mind—to feed the soul with divine knowledge—to impress it with heavenly truths—and form it into a likeness to God, and restore it to his image and favor; and when the soul is thus impressed, renewed, and sanctified, it is a minister's duty to cherish the sacred sparks that are kindled within, to brighten every grace, and (under the conduct of the Holy Spirit) prepare and polish believers for the inheritance of the saints in light. The work of a minister is of a spiritual nature, and doth not relate to the concerns of the body, or of the present world; but it chiefly relates to the concerns of the soul, and of a future and eternal world. "My kingdom," says Christ, "is not of this world," John xviii. 36. The blessed Jesus, the great founder of the church, did not affect secular state or grandeur; neither did he attempt to set up a temporal kingdom. This was quite out of his view and design. His intention was not to aspire to an earthly crown; but to erect a spiritual empire, to reign in the souls of men, and make them a willing people in the day of his power. And as Christ's kingdom is not of this world, it is not the business of those who are called to be his

ministers to carry on a secular interest, or promote a worldly design; but to treat with men about things of a spiritual nature—to show them the way of salvation—and tell them what they must do to inherit eternal life. We are to exhort them not to be conformed to the world, but to guard against its snares and temptations; to overcome it by faith; and seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

The design of our profession is not to make men great, but good; it is not to flatter their ambition, or to gratify their pride or sensuality; but to press them to humility and poverty of spirit, and to excite them to true piety and sincere devotedness to God. It is no part of our office to assist men in the pursuit of secular glory, much less are we to encourage them in an *eager chase* of worldly honors, riches, and pleasures; but we are to call them off from these gaudy and delusive things, and to preach to them the doctrine of self-denial and the cross, and lay open before them a brighter and more inviting scene than this world can possibly afford,—I mean the joys of Paradise, the ineffable treasures of the kingdom of heaven, and a celestial crown which shines with a peculiar lustre in the view of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. We are to call men off from all undue regard to sensual objects and earthly enjoyments, and exhort them to pursue a spiritual and intellectual happiness, which consists in the knowledge and love of God, and that sublime pleasure which flows from the light of his countenance, and the ravishing tokens of his favor. The work of a ministry is to check men's inordinate fondness for the body, and to awaken in them a just sense of the worth of the soul, and a due concern for its welfare and felicity, and to call off their prospects and regards from things temporal to things eternal. It is to call men off from earth to heaven—from mammon to Jesus—and from the world to God; and prompt and excite them to spend their most solicitous thoughts and greatest care about the immortal spirit, to work out their own salvation, and to lay a good foundation for the world to come, as knowing if the soul be safe and happy in the other world, the body, in its appointed time, will also be glorious and happy with it. And as the work a minister is called to is of a spiritual nature, and chiefly concerns the soul and another world, so the methods we are to make use of to carry on this work are also spiritual. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal," 2 Cor. x. 4. It is true, as we are sent as messengers and servants by the King of heaven, we are to compel men to come in, (Luke xiv. 23)—we are to compel men to come into the Christian church, and to accept the grace of the gospel; we are to compel sinners to list themselves in the service of Christ; but we are not to compel them by external violence, or by outward rigor and severity, but by rational conviction, and by scripture light and evidence, and with a spirit of meekness; for "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." We are to draw men to Jesus, not by force of arms, but by dint of argument, and cords of love. We are to bring back straying souls to the great and good *Shepherd*, not by human threatenings, or by cruel and unjust treatment; but by the power of reason, by all the charms of sacred and divine eloquence, and by motives drawn from a future world. And if, after all our arguments and friendly endeavors, sinners remain obstinate and inflexible, and persist in their infidelity, we should shed tears of pity over their obduracy, and in the prospect of those miseries that are coming upon them, in imitation of our compassionate *Master*, who, when he came near *Jerusalem*, the seat of an infidel, stubborn, and perverse generation, "beheld the city, and wept over it," Luke xix. 41. And as we are not to proselyte men to the faith of Christ by carnal weapons, or to compel strangers to come into his church by human tribunals, or the vain terrors of men; so it should be matter of lamentation, that an *institution* of our blessed Lord, which is of a *spiritual nature*, should be turned into an instrument of worldly policy, and made a necessary *qualification* for a *civil office*. As by this means the sacrament of the Lord's Supper hath been notoriously prostituted and abused, so hereby (as Bishop Hoadly observes) that holy solemnity, which was intended as a serious remembrance of the death of our Saviour, is *debased into a political tool, and an engine of state*.

XIII.—THE GREATNESS OF THE PREACHER'S WORK.

BY THE REV. E. PORTER, D. D.

I SHALL attempt to illustrate the greatness of the preacher's work by its *objects*. These we may contemplate as they respect the temporal and eternal concerns of men, the interests of the church, and the glory of God.

It may be safely affirmed, that the public teachers of religion have contributed more than any other class of men to raise the one of morals; more to promote social and civil order; to tame the fierceness of human passions; to produce refinement of taste and manners; and to advance the interests of sound learning. Ample confirmation of all this might be drawn from history; but there lies a shorter appeal to facts within our own observation. Visit the families that compose a religious congregation; mark their habits with the eye of a careful observer; and you will perceive that the degree of sobriety, decorum, and intellectual cultivation which prevails among them, is generally correspondent to the talents and fidelity of their spiritual instructor. If the divine institution of public preaching were suspended, the day of sacred rest would be devoted to secular business, and licentious amusement. Suppose, then, the experiment to be made. Shut up our pulpits, and you abolish the Sabbath. Abolish the Sabbath, with its system of moral restraints, and what barrier have you left against universal profligacy of manners, and prostration of all that is precious or venerable in the land? How long will it be before no honest man shall sleep quietly in his own bed? Who would be answerable for the mischiefs that must result from such an experiment in twelve months? The Sabbath, then, it must be admitted, with its awful sanctions, holds men in check by a thousand ties, compared with which mere human laws are frail as the spider's web. Every able, faithful preacher does more to guard the vital interests of community than five magistrates, armed with penal statutes; and more than five hundred visionary philosophers, with their best theories on the perfectibility of man.

But the preacher's work has nobler objects than these; objects which claim his supreme affection, and his unremitted efforts; objects no less important than the glory of the infinite God, and the immortal interests of men. From the ruins of this apostate world God has undertaken to erect a kingdom of holiness. This he does by the instrumentality of means, among which preaching holds a conspicuous place. To advance this kingdom is the great end of the natural world, and of the stupendous scheme of redemption and providence. For this the Eternal Word became incarnate, and hung upon a cross; for this prophets have taught, and martyrs bled, and angels, as ministering spirits to the church, have flown on messages of mercy.

Every wheel in the vast machinery of providence moves with ultimate reference to the grand results of the kingdom of grace. Another day will reveal how all the bustle and uproar of this world are to be made instrumental of promoting the interests of the church. For this monarchs are elevated or deposed—empires flourish or decline; for this the seasons perform their circuits, the sea rolls its waves, and the earth yields its fruit; to this every star that glitters in the firmament, and every leaf that trembles in the forest, the sun and the glow-worm, the seraph and the reptile, the globe and the floating atom, are all subservient.

To advance this kingdom of holiness is the preacher's work; and must not that object for which the world exists—that object, the promotion of which demands the united efforts of heaven and earth, be deemed important? Ask angels. Why did they celebrate the Saviour's birth? Why does the conversion of one sinner swell the songs of heaven? Bring forward now the objects which most excite the efforts and enterprise of this busy world. The mechanic and the husbandman rise with the first dawn of the morning to resume their customary labors, to provide for their families, and promote the useful arts of life; the physician pores over the pages of Hippocrates and Boerhaave, and visits the chamber of disease, that he may preserve the life of the body; the scholar grows pale at the midnight lamp, and ripens for a premature grave in pursuit of knowledge; the merchant loads his ship, and the mariner braves the tempest, to accumulate wealth; the soldier seeks to signalize his valor amidst scenes of blood; the statesman studies the deep mazes of political

management, by which rivals are supplanted, and cabinets controlled; the ambitious prince hopes to immortalize his name, by driving his chariot over the wrecks of subjugated kingdoms.

Laying out of the question at present the scenes of infamy and misery which the world presents, among those employments which are commonly deemed necessary, lawful, honorable, what one can bear comparison, in point of importance, with the work of the Christian preacher? Bring forward your heroes and statesmen—your Marlboroughs, and Pitts, and Nelsons; what have they achieved? Grant that they are entitled to the first rank among the renowned of the earth, what is that rank to the immortal honor that awaits the faithful minister of Jesus? He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way has won a crown,

"Compared with which,
The laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds."

XIV.—THE OBSTRUCTIONS OF THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

BY THE REV. JOHN RYLAND, D. D.

You must wrestle, not merely against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. You must be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, who seduced so many angels of light from their allegiance to God, and overcame our first parents in paradise; who bruised the heel of the Captain of our salvation, and maketh war on the remnant of his seed; and who is the god of this world, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Nor is it enough that you stand your ground against him; you must carry on an offensive war with him, make bold inroads into the territories he claims for his own, and attempt to rescue those who have been long held in bondage by the powers of darkness. *Who is sufficient for these things?* You are to labor for the deliverance of those who do not as yet wish for the liberty of the sons of God; who seem, therefore, to be the lawful captives of him that destroyeth souls. And verily God might justly leave them to him as their tormentor, to whom they have so readily listened, when he acted the part of a tempter. But sovereign mercy has resolved that the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; yea, the lawful captive shall be set free. He who redeemed them by price can redeem them also by power; and can make the feeble become as David, to pluck the prey out of the mouth of this roaring lion.

We must, indeed, often address ourselves to those who are dead to all that is spiritually good; who have no proper sense of moral excellence; no relish even for the bliss of heaven. Their being thus *dead in trespasses and sins* is by no means an excuse for their disregarding the call of the gospel. It is a sinful death. It consists in being entirely under the influence of sin; or altogether alienated from the life of God. Natural death is the involuntary separation of the soul from the body; this is the consequence of sin, but is not itself sinful; no one thinks of blaming a man for dying, or for being sick unto death. But spiritual death is the voluntary and entire separation of the soul from God. This is sin itself, the essence of sin, the strength of sin, the dominion of sin in the soul. And can this excuse the sinner? Or is the believer, who has some life towards God, excusable in proportion as he approaches to the state of them who are absolutely dead to God? Can any degree of alienation from God render it absurd to call on men to return unto him? By no means. But so completely are sinners estranged from God that I should expect all our labors to be in vain, did I not trust in him who quickeneth the dead. Verily, I should despair of converting one soul, if he who has commanded us to prophesy unto these slain, had not encouraged us to hope that his Spirit will breathe upon them, that they may live. But if any tinge of despondency should infuse itself into our minds, while we exclaim, *Who is sufficient for these things?* let us, my brother, remember "what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the energy of his mighty power." He who raised up our Lord's body from the grave, and who quickened us, when we ourselves were dead in sins, can impart spiritual life to whomsoever he pleaseth.

But when sinners have heard the voice of the Son of God, and begin to live the life of faith, ministers must still expect to meet with farther difficulties. Though they ar-

dently wish to present every one of their converts perfect in Christ Jesus; and labor to this end, striving according to his working, who worketh in them mightily; yet they will have to lament a number of impediments, which retard the blessed work. Instead of having fully apprehended that for which they were apprehended of Christ; alas! how few appear to follow hard after the Lord! All are imperfect. But how very imperfect are many! What defects! what mixtures! what inconsistencies do we find in those who profess to be called to glory and virtue! It would afford us unutterable joy could we affirm of all the members of our churches, "Though they have not attained, neither are they already perfect, yet one thing they do, they press towards the mark, and deeply regret their falling short of it; they aim at complete conformity to Christ. When in faithfulness we smite them, even so as to wound their consciences, they treat it as a kindness and not as an injury. They remember the remark of the wise man, 'As an earring of gold, or an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.'" But instead of finding this the case with all professors, we shall meet with too many to whom it will be very difficult so to hint at their imperfections, as not to excite their resentment. Even some who acknowledge their depravity in the strongest *general* terms will scarcely bear to have their minister particularly specify an instance in which they appear most deficient. But that which adds more to the difficulty of our work, than all the obstructions I have named, is sin that dwelleth in *us*, and too easily besets ourselves. How many are the evils of our own hearts! What need do we find of constant watchfulness, and earnest prayer for the supply of the Spirit! Self, the most subtle and dangerous of all our foes, will assume a thousand forms to draw off our supreme attention from our Lord. Both the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the mind must be continually opposed and mortified. Sins of the former class might more speedily ruin our character among men; but the latter would equally injure our usefulness, by grieving the Spirit of God; and as certainly ruin our souls. But supposing we escape any public scandal, or total apostacy and final ruin, we must maintain a daily conflict with every sinful propensity, or we shall lessen our usefulness, and lose those consolations which are the foretastes of heavenly blessedness. And at best, we shall find frequent seasons of spiritual distress, while we are obliged to exclaim with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

XV.—RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MINISTERIAL WORK.

BY THE REV. A. REED, D. D.

Responsibility necessarily attends the powers of reflection and volition; and is, therefore, co-extensive with the engagements and duties of human life. Ministerial responsibility, however, stands fearfully pre-eminent; and almost every title indicating the office is designed to bring it to our remembrance. The pastor in the first epistle of Timothy, vi. 11, is called a *man of God*, to teach us that he is immediately accountable to the Supreme Being; and that his accountability rises in exact proportion to the value and extent of his trust.

In slightly elucidating this affecting subject, let me remind you that your ministerial office increases your *personal* responsibility. It is your privilege to find in your professional duties every thing conducive to your particular salvation. Unlike other men, your very vocation is to prayer, to watchfulness, to heavenly contemplation, and spiritual exertion. It might well be expected that while we are thus exercised for the benefit of others, it should be beneficial in a superlative degree to ourselves; that in teaching others we should become the wiser ourselves; that in warning others we should the more readily take the cautions we give; and that in commending to them the great interests of their salvation, it should be endeared to our own affections as above all price. Can we conceive of a more exasperated case of folly and of crime than the reverse of this? A man who, by profession, is denouncing the world, but in heart making it the object of his idolatry. A man who, pressing on others the importance of their redemption, and is knowingly neglecting his own. A man who ostentatiously avows himself to be the servant of God; but who, in fact, in principle is serving only himself, and professes to serve God, only that he may serve himself the

more effectually. Oh, if demons laugh, if angels tremble, it is at such a sight!

Look, I beseech you, to your own personal redemption. See that you never know the bitterness of that exclamation—"They made me keeper of the vineyard, but my own vineyard have I not kept."—What shall it profit a man, though he should save the world, if he should lose his own soul? Profit! Their salvation would be his loss—the worst dregs in his cup of wo? When fiendish malice sought to give the most pungent agony to the sufferings of the Saviour, it exclaimed, "He saved others, *himself* he cannot save!" There was no sting in these words to his innocent mind; but if they shall be repeated in the ear of the guilty pastor, as he sinks from the presence of his Judge, oh, tell me, will there not be in them a worm which neither sleeps nor dies!

Then there is the responsibility of the *Pastor*. You are now taking the oversight of the people. You will certainly not be answerable for the actual salvation of all who may here come beneath your charge; but you will be answerable for employing your best efforts towards their salvation. You are to feed them with knowledge and understanding. You are to declare to them the whole counsel of God as they need it. You are to administer to them every service of religion; and to employ every means in your power for their spiritual and eternal welfare. If any remain ignorant, it must not be that you have not instructed them; if any remain obdurate, it must not be that you have neglected to warn them; if any perish, it must not be that you have not sought to save them; or it will be required at your hands, blood for blood, life for life!

Perish! and will any who are thus committed to your charge, perish from under your care? Yes, alas! it is to be feared they will. Oh, how is this reflection adapted to awaken you to exertion and to prayer! And if such erring spirits meet you in judgment, as they must; and should testify that they perish, not by your negligence, but their own wilfulness, what will it not imply, on your part, of wisdom and of piety, of intercession and of fidelity!

This responsibility takes a wider range. You are accountable, not merely for those who come under your care, but for all those who might be *brought* under it. You are the property of mankind, and are to live for all. You are the light of the world, and are not to empale your light within these or any walls. And if your light shall be hid beneath a bushel, instead of flaming on the darkness around you as a beacon and a guide; and if your talent shall be hidden in a napkin, instead of being circulated for the interests of men; and if your influence and exertions shall not be tasked to their fair and full amount in the service of your Lord; then will you be obnoxious to his righteous censure! The very *times* in which you are called to labor, fearfully accumulate the weight of your responsibility. The night is past and the day is come; and he who sleeps now is guilty of sleeping through the very period allotted to holy activity: besides, our privileges are so great; the aspect of things is so peculiar; the interests at stake are so momentous; and the general movement indicates so fully the approach of a mighty and final struggle between the foes and friends of truth, benevolence, and piety; that he who, at such a period, shall not be found striving at his post, will be considered as guilty, not of ordinary negligence, but of treachery—as having betrayed a cause on which the world is depending, and for which angels have become militant.

There is yet another thought full of solemnity. It is that our responsibility attaches itself to *eternity*. This is an awful peculiarity in the functions of the minister. The merchant, if he mistake in his venture, wastes his estate; the statesman, if he fails in his duty, ruins a kingdom; the minister, if he fails in his, damns his soul! In their case, the consequences of responsibility are bounded by the good and evil of this life; and in the great judgment it will be forgotten what estates or empires have been lost or won; but in his case the effect will be extreme, everlasting, infinite! The lost soul must live forever; and will be the wretched and imperishable monument of his negligence, infidelity, and guilt!

Keep, then, this issue, this judgment, this eternity, continually in view. Connect them in thought, as in fact they are inseparably connected with the solemnities of this day. Think of the interval between them as exceedingly short. Should your labors run through the ordinary space, still they will be as the work of a day. And they may be shorter. John Hooper (a name

repeated only to be loved and respected) prematurely died.* He was in the midst of life, and full of vigorous health beyond his brethren, when his summons came. Your sun, like his, may go down at noon. The uncertainty associated with the event is designed to keep us habitually ready. If we knew the time, however near, we might loiter in the interval; but since it may be at any time, we must be as those who always wait and always watch for their expected Lord. Anticipate the period. Judge yourself, that you may not be judged; render a frequent and strict account to your own conscience, before you shall be called to render it once and forever. Look at all things in those solemn aspects and piercing lights which death and immortality shall impart to them.

XVI.—THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY IN CONNECTION WITH ITS ENCOURAGEMENTS AND REWARD.

BY THE REV. GREVILLE EWING.

Observe its present encouragement. "And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal." By "wages," in scripture, as received by servants engaged in the work of the Lord, we are often to understand the means of their temporal support. That these should be duly given, the Lord hath ordained in the scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments. Jesus Christ himself condescended to use money. His disciples had, that very day, gone to Sychar to buy meat. He had a "bag," the contents of which became a prey to the traitor, whom he was in the habit of employing to buy the things needed against the feasts, and to give something to the poor. While personally on earth, he took the charge of securing the providential supply of those whom he sent into his harvest: and they were well supplied; for when he afterwards asked them, "Lacked ye any thing?" they said, "Nothing." Usually, however, he devolves the charge of supporting his laborers, on those among whom, and for whom, they labor; and these will ever find it their interest, as it is their duty, and while rightly disposed their inclination, to endeavor to keep their Lord's laborers, and their own for the Lord's sake, without "lacking," and without "carefulness."

But were I to confine myself here to the subordinate subject of temporal support, I should mistake the spirit and meaning of my text, and, I am persuaded, the state also of your mind, my brother; as certainly the disciples did the state of our Saviour's, when, under the ardor of "the zeal of his Father's house, which had eaten up" his soul, he had to sustain their importunity respecting the faintness of his body, while "they prayed him, saying, Master, eat." No! Christ could truly say of his Father, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food;" and he here does his servants the honor to call them to follow his example. The "wages" of which he speaks, are of the noblest kind. He considers the "wages" of the reaper, and the fruit of the husbandry, as the same thing; and he connects both, not with the sustenance of this mortal life, but with "life eternal." Our encouragement, then, is the hope of a measure of success, in reaping the produce of our Lord's harvest. This is our "wages:" this the "fruit" of our gathering. Let us rise above the supplies, and wants, and cares of humanity. Let us emulate the spirit of Paul when he said, "We seek not yours, but you; now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord; what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"

To be enabled so to speak that many believe; to behold the righteousness of God by faith, revealed to faith; to speak to the edification, and exhortation, and comfort of Christian brethren; to search the scriptures, to preach the gospel, to lead the worship, and administer the ordinances and the discipline of the church; to give ourselves wholly to these things, to spend and be spent in them; to be friends, and counsellors, and ensamples of the flock; to be spiritual fathers in Christ, and to see, or hear, that our children are walking in the truth;—these are the joys which revive us in all our labors. The spirit, which seeks such joys as these, ensures to us at once, through the blessing of God, the honor, the comfort, and the usefulness of our sacred office.

* The former pastor of Old Gravel Lane Church.

whereas an opposite disposition must, in all these respects, have a tendency the very reverse. It was the crowning curse on the family of Eli, "that every one that was left in his house should come to [the faithful priest,] and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and should say, Put me, I pra thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread." On the other hand, it is the happiness of the disinterested servant of the Lord, that he is received by the brethren with a measure of acceptance; nay, that he is esteemed very highly in love for his work's sake. He is working for eternity; and it is to him a very small thing to be judged of man's judgment; yet he is permitted to enjoy, even in time, the satisfaction, and delight, and wonder, and gratitude, occasioned by the effect of his feeble efforts, in promoting the glory of the Redeemer and the salvation of the lost.

Along with this high encouragement, we are made immediately to feel the weight of our charge. Nothing less depends on it than the life of souls. "Take heed," saith Paul, "unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Nor is there alone an exalted hope: there is also a dreadful alternative. "If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon," (namely, the foundation, which is Jesus Christ,) "he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." We shall not, when we fail, be necessarily destroyed with our work; but we must be subjected to the same fiery trial; and it is only by being enabled to come forth from it as gold, that we shall escape being consumed like the baser materials. Again, the apostle, even when he is thanking God for a continual triumph in Christ, expresses himself in the most awful manner. "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life: and who is sufficient for these things?"

We have seen the nature of our work, and its present encouragement,—let us consider,

3. Its final reward. "And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." Jesus stood alone in sowing. To him all the prophets give witness. His forerunner, in particular, immediately prepared his way. But still he was alone when, taking up the words of the Baptist, "he began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In like manner, he was alone when he commenced his work of saving his people from their sins, in the neighborhood of the city of Sychar. And if he stood alone in his primary labors as a teacher, condescending to give line upon line, and precept upon precept, and enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself, much more was this the case when he came to the last conflict, in which he bruised the serpent's head. "Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled." "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me." Thus was he entirely by himself, when he did and suffered all that was necessary to produce the glorious harvest of the husbandry of God. But in the joyful work of reaping that harvest, he associated with himself his "gifts to men." They accompanied him in his ministry, and witnessed its success, when he gathered "the first-fruits" upon earth, of which the passage before us furnishes an example. Once and again he sent them forth to preach the glad tidings of the kingdom; and "they returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." Afterwards, they were to follow him by their ministry, in all subsequent ages of the church. And, in blessing their ministry, he here declares it to be his gracious design, that, when their labors on earth should be over, they should be called together, to meet their Lord, and to partake with him of his mediatorial reward. He is to rejoice in the success he shall have given them, and they shall rejoice in the success they shall have had; and that, as the result of their Lord's exclusive work, "the travail of his soul," no less, or rather infinitely more, than as the countenance given to their humble services. This joy

of the sower and the reapers shall be experienced "together;" when the reapers have departed to be with Christ, which is far better; nay, when they have been placed at his right hand, when they have been confessed by Christ before his Father, and all the holy angels; and when, with all the ransomed of the Lord, they have returned, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads, when they have obtained joy and gladness, and sorrow and sadness have fled away.

It appears from the following verse, that our Saviour delighted to dwell on this blessed prospect. He illustrates it by a proverbial saying, taken from the state of things in this world; which he applies to himself and his servants, in a manner altogether singular, to show at once the riches and sovereignty of his own grace, and the certain reward of grace, which awaits the exertions of their honored instrumentality in his service. The proverb is, in itself, of a melancholy complexion. It has originated in the mutability and transitory nature of human affairs; the vicissitudes of life, the reverses of prosperity and adversity, the ravages of war, or the universal sentence of mortality. To these gloomy circumstances must the "saying" refer, "one soweth and another reapeth." How, then, is it verified in the Redeemer's kingdom, and how should such a case be an emblem of joy? because it is a case of contrast, and not of resemblance. Observe the emphasis to be laid on the word "herein," and the explanation of it, which is given in the verse that follows:—"And HEREIN is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors." When the saying proves true in the course of this world, the laborer reluctantly gives place to his successors: here he has sent them, and both parties shall meet at last, and shall finally rejoice together: in this world, the superseded laborer mourns alone his frustrated purposes, and the successors rejoice, at his expense, in schemes which shall soon be equally abortive: in the kingdom of Christ, the laborer shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied, and the reapers shall render to him the glory which is due to his name.

XVII.—SCRIPTURAL PREACHING

BY REV. MATTHEW HENRY

You must faithfully and wisely explain and apply the oracles of God. You have declared that you receive the holy scriptures as of divine authority, and the standing rule of your faith and practice, and as such we commit them to you to be your treasury and touchstone, the fountain whence you must derive your knowledge, and the foundation on which you must build your faith; for by them is "the man of God perfect," accomplished as a man of God, and "thoroughly furnished for every good word and work," 2 Tim. iii. 17.

The book of the law was committed to the custody of the priests, (Deut. xvii. 18,) and it is a very proper and significant usage, in some churches, to put the Bible into the hand of ministers when they ordain them. That is one of the great things we commit to you. Keep the Bible as a sacred deposit of inestimable value, which being as a light shining in a dark place, it is not strange if the powers of darkness level all their force against it, to corrupt it, to slacken the obligation, or lessen the reputation of it, to take it away from us, or, which would come all to one, to take us off from it to follow some false light. It is therefore given in charge to all Christians, but to ministers in an especial manner, "to hold fast that form of sound words," which we have in the scriptures, "in faith and love," and to hold to it. Let us be true to this trust, as faithful keepers both of the word and things contained in the scriptures, as the Masorites, among the Jews, were of the *letter* of the Old Testament, who could tell how often each letter of the alphabet was to be found in their Hebrew Bible; and let us not come under the black character of those who, in the primitive church, were called *traditores*, *traitors*, or *betrayers*, because, to avoid suffering, they gave up their Bibles to their persecutors.

In all your preaching keep close to the scripture, and fetch both matter and words thence. "To the law and to the testimony." It is scripture philosophy and scripture oratory, that ministers must be masters of, and serve Christ and his church with; if they speak not according to that rule, it is because there is not that light in them that should be. You have a gospel to preach, not a gospel to make; and then only are faithful to your commission when

you strictly pursue your instructions, and deliver all that and that only "which you have received of the Lord," in its native purity and simplicity, as one who dares not add thereto, or diminish from it, nor make any alteration.

Study the true and genuine sense of scripture, by consulting the originals, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and rest not in scripture words and phrases, without understanding the true import and intention of them, and doing what you can that those you speak to may rightly understand it too; for what will it avail us *hærere in cortice*—"to worship in the outer court?" Paul, when he was a Pharisee, had his Bible at his fingers' ends, and yet owns he was *without* the law, because he was a stranger to the true intent and meaning of it; and what does it profit then? Nay, if we do not take pains thoroughly and truly to understand the scripture, we shall be in danger of handling it deceitfully, and wresting it to our own and others' destruction. In plain texts, keep to the plain sense; in difficult ones, be modest and humble in your researches, and "keep to the proportion of faith," expounding them by them that are more plain.

Accustom yourselves to a scripture language; and labor to be ready, as well as mighty in the scriptures, that you may speak of divine things in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches, for in those words they are brought with the most power, both to convince and to comfort. Do what you can, therefore, to make them familiar both to yourselves and to your hearers. Whence can we better fetch both strength and ornament to what we say, than from the scripture?

In order to all this, I earnestly wish that the reading and expounding of the scriptures were universally practised in all our congregations, as, blessed be God, it is in many. It has been and would be of great use to increase scripture knowledge both in ministers and people; and some plain and obvious observations gathered out of a chapter in the exposition of it might do as much to enlighten the mind, and direct the conscience, as a long studied train of arguments in a sermon. *Dulcius ex ipso fonte bibuntur aquæ,*—"Water drunk from the spring-head is sweet indeed."

XVIII.—THE CROSS OF CHRIST THE SUM OF EVANGELICAL PREACHING.

BY THE REV. J. DORE.

Would you convey to sinners the most awful and impressive ideas of divine justice? You must not merely describe the spotless purity of God—you must not only have recourse to striking images—you must not barely proclaim the threatenings of the law—you must not think it sufficient to lead them in imagination to Sinai's flaming mount, that the lightning and the thunder, and the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of God, may strike their consciences with a deep sense of the glorious holiness of the supreme Legislator.—Nor would your purpose be fully attained, could you open the pit of hell, and present to their terrified view all the horrors of the infernal regions; the worm that never dies; the fire that is never quenched; the smoke of torment ascending in fearful columns forever and ever; fallen angels in chains of darkness; and human souls weeping on account of the miseries that are come upon them, wailing for their past transgressions, and gnashing their teeth against their inexorable Judge. No; to succeed in your attempt to penetrate the consciences of men with a sense of the spotless purity of the divine Nature, you must conduct them to the foot of the cross, and show them the Son of God in the day of his distress, stretched on an ignominious tree, transfixed with the arrows of justice, and exclaiming in all the agonies of wo, in the most pathetic accents, "Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" You must explain to them the reason of the Redeemer's sufferings; you must tell them, in the expressive language of the prophet, that "all we like sheep have gone astray, and that the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" that he is "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;" and in the plain, but energetic words of the apostles Paul and Peter, that "he who knew no sin, is made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:" and that "he, the just, suffers for us, the unjust, that he might bring us to God." You must teach them God is so holy, that, rather than pardon sin, without expressing his detestation of it in some public and awful manner, he punish-

es it in the person of his own Son, the object of his tenderest love.

This, through the divine blessing, is the way, and the only way to make sinners thoroughly sensible what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against the most holy Lord God. The cross of Christ proclaims the rectitude of the divine Nature, with the strongest emphasis, and with the most powerful energy. Here we behold with wonder, gratitude, and joy, that delightfully interesting character, a "just God and a Saviour." Here, justice appears exalted, aggrandized, infinitely glorified, while mercy triumphs in the salvation of a multitude that no man can number.

The benevolence of Deity is nowhere seen with so bright a lustre as in the crucifixion of the Son of God. Would you teach men how good God is? You must not confine your attention to the works of creation, or to the beneficial operations of providence; nor must you merely display the rich favors of divine grace; but you must show them the wonderful way in which spiritual blessings are dispensed. You must point out to them "the BRIGHTNESS of the Father's glory, and the EXPRESS IMAGE of his person," agonizing on the accursed tree, and inform them, that "God so loved the world," in such an amazing manner, and to such an astonishing degree, "that he spared not, but freely gave up his own Son," as a sacrifice for human guilt. This truly wonderful fact displays the love of God in its unutterable grandeur. It exalts the divine benevolence beyond the power of language to describe, or fancy to conceive. It presents to our enraptured view the sublimest philosophy that ever glowed in the heart of that great and infinitely glorious Being, whose name and nature are love.

As divine justice and mercy are most illustriously displayed, so the wisdom of God appears to peculiar advantage, in the great work finished on the cross. "Herein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." For the cross provides, at once, for the glory of the supreme Legislator, and the salvation of transgressors. It reconciles the claims of justice with the demands of mercy. It displays the most unbounded love to sinners, and the most intense hatred of their sins. It pacifies the guilty conscience of the believer, and purifies his polluted heart. It sinks him to the lowest state of humiliation, and elevates him to the most exalted dignity. It renders the malignant efforts of Satan the means of destroying his own kingdom; for his empire was shaken to its centre when he triumphed over Jesus on the cross.

Well, then, might Paul glory in the cross of Christ; for, though the cross, as the punishment of slaves for the most atrocious crimes, be an object of infamy, the cross of Christ appeared to the apostle as full of glory, not only on account of the infinite worth of him who hung upon it, and the blessings, immensely rich, which result from his crucifixion; but because the view of the divine character which it presents, is the most awful, the most lovely, and the most transporting, that can be conceived. Here God appears in "his whole round of rays complete," in light that is full of glory. Here eminently shine, here in the brightest colors are displayed, all those matchless excellencies of Deity, which ensure the happiness, the inconceivable and everlasting happiness of every one who "flees for refuge to the hope set before us" in the gospel. Well therefore might Paul "determine to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

XIX.—ON PREACHING CHRIST IN CONNECTION WITH PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

BY THE REV. RICHARD PEARSALL.

In the general your business is to preach Christ, for so says the apostle, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." Set him forth in all those lights in which the gospel represents him; in his divine and human natures; in his mediatorial character and offices; and see that you preach him in these articles, not as a matter of speculation, but to draw all men unto him, and to the high esteem and most affectionate veneration of him. Preach him, my fellow-laborer, as God hath exalted him, even as a Prince and a Saviour. Take pains to manifest the savor of "him, whom to know is life eternal." Do this as the friend of the bridegroom and the friend of sinners. You know who it is "that determined to know nothing" as a preacher, "but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." And is there not the highest reason to preach Christ frequently? Are you speaking to dead souls

and can you speak of one so proper as of him who is life? since "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Of whom more suitably can you speak than of so able and wise a physician, while you are discoursing to those who are under the most loathsome and dangerous diseases! If he is the rock, the tried stone, the chief corner-stone, laid in Sion, for sinners to build upon; since he is the only surety by whom their debts can be paid; the only city of refuge where they can be safe; the righteousness whereby they are to be justified; the fountain where they are to be washed; the way in which distant souls can be brought to God and glory, there is the highest reason why we should dwell much upon Christ in our preaching.

Well, then, invite sinners to him, and to an offended Majesty through him. As the foundation of all, show your uninformed, unconvinced hearers the need they stand in of a Redeemer; open frequently the nature of sin as a breach of the divine law, as exposing the sinner to that dreadful and everlasting curse which is annexed to it. Show them that they have sinned; paint out in awful colors the dreadful precipice they stand upon the brink of; that they are slaves to their lusts, and to Satan operating by them. Then open to them the dolefulness of such a state, and their inability to extricate themselves out of it. This will lead you to insist often on the necessity of those graces and duties which the apostle made the sum of his ministry, when "he testified to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ;" and upon which are suspended so many and glorious privileges. I say again, treat those subjects often in your sermons; open them clearly, and then press them pathetically.

When you address yourselves to sinners sleeping in the laps of their Delilahs, and their enemies upon them, hanging over everlasting burnings, and at a distance from the only Saviour, speak to them as one in earnest, mourn over them from a spirit of faith and Christian benevolence; touch all the tender passions; put on bowels of mercy; draw sinners with the cords of love; open the treasures of grace; pray and beseech them as in God's name and Christ's stead to be reconciled. At other times put on the Boanerges, as a son of thunder cry aloud and spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; rouse the fear of sinners, till from the apprehensions of wrath they are brought to fly as for their lives. Do not daub here with untempered mortar; do not flatter, oh do not be afraid of disturbing that repose which arises from an insensibility and fatal opiates. Act in such an affair with all the faithfulness of a steward, of a herald, of an ambassador; act in such a manner, that you may have comfort in your own soul, and you may, looking upward, say, "I am pure from the blood of all men." Insist upon these capital points often; impressions are hard to be made upon the clods of the vineyard; and if any are made, how easily do they fade and evaporate! There are some with whom you are to deal tenderly; sorrowful breasts need a Barnabas; a wounded spirit who can bear? Learn of your Saviour to "bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to such captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; that you may give to them that mourn in Zion, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

I often call to mind the following reflection of the incomparable Dr. Bates, which I would here transcribe, both to engage ministers' peculiar diligence, and all Christians' prayer for them. "The work of a minister has its peculiar disadvantage: that whereas an artificer, how curious and difficult soever his work may be, yet has this encouragement, that what is begun with art and care, he finds in the same state in which it was left. A painter that designs an exact piece, draws many lines, often touches it with his pencil, to give it life and beauty, and, though unfinished, it is not spoiled by intermission. A sculptor that carves a statue, though his labor be hard from the resistance of the matter, yet his work remains firm and durable. But the heart of a man is of a strange temper; hard as marble, not easily susceptible of heavenly impressions; yet fluid as water, those impressions defaced in it. It is exposed to so many temptations, that induce an oblivion of eternal things, that without frequent excitations to quicken and confirm its holy purposes, it grows careless, and all the labor is lost that was spent upon it."—*See his Funeral Sermon for Dr. Manton.*

Your business also as a preacher will be

to confirm the wavering, to strengthen the weak, to guard them against backslidings, to build up in knowledge and holiness all that are regenerated. Preach duty to God and man in all its extensive circle. Affirm constantly that "every one who names the name of Christ must depart from all iniquity." And "that they who believe must be careful to maintain good works," evince the necessity, display the beauty of holiness, and exhort powerfully "to follow after it." Press practical religion in all its branches, personal and relative, in heart and life; support your exhortations with every proper argument, and by annexing suitable directions, lead your people on in the path of duty. And as you will acquaint yourself with the state of your people, as an affectionate friend and tender minister, so you will adapt your discourses occasionally to their cases, as under spiritual exercises, or providential dispensations; but yet in such a manner as that they may be serviceable to others. Here divine wisdom is profitable to direct.

XX.—MINISTERS SAVORS OF CHRIST

BY THE REV. W. JAY.

Be a savor of Christ in your preaching. Are there none whose discourses savor more of Plato, of Seneca, and Socrates, and Xenophon, than of the worthy name by which we are called? Are there none whose sermons abound with worldly politics, angry controversies, curious criticisms, ingenious remarks, and *merely* moral controversies, rather than with the doctrine of salvation by the cross, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? If ever he is referred to, is it not in a way of cold reserve, or indirect allusion? We hear much in our day of Antinomians. Such I am persuaded there are. We frequently meet with those who have grown wanton in evangelical privileges, and use their liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, and not as the servants of God. Of such we need not be afraid to speak in scriptural language; they are *ungodly men*, that turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. We ought to show our disapprobation of those whose sentiments professedly degrade the law of God as a rule of life; treat holiness and good works as no more the evidences and effects of salvation than the cause of it; and not only deny, but ridicule the reality and progress of a work of grace in the heart. From such withdraw thyself; but I dare not set down every one as deserving this reproach who incurs the name. We ought to consider much from whom the charge comes; for it may so happen that the censured are deemed excessive, because the censurers are themselves defective. And I cannot but fear, lest some of our younger and less experienced brethren in avoiding one extreme run into another; and from a laudable concern to guard the truths of the gospel, impoverish them, and feed their flocks on such poor and sparing pasture, as to tempt them to break bounds, and enter the rank grasses of these pseudo-doctrinalists. Your admonisher this morning mentions this the more readily, because he remembers a time when he erred a little in this direction himself; and he is not ashamed to confess, that there are of his earlier sermons such as he could not conscientiously preach again; not because they were not consistent with the "truth as it is in Jesus," or did not even imply it, but because, according to his present views, they did not fully express it, and sufficiently make manifest the savor of his knowledge.

"A young divine," says Manton, "one day asked an old Christian, 'What shall I preach?' He received for answer, 'Preach Christ!' 'Oh, I have preached him,' says he, 'already.' 'Why then,' added the sage, 'preach him again—preach him always—and preach him only.'" This is advice which, however lightly some may treat it now, all those worthies would have sanctioned, whose works praise them in the gate. The time would fail me to tell of Leighton, and Hall, and Owen, and Baxter, and Reynolds, and Howe, and Charnock, and Polhill, and Bates, and Watts, and Doddridge, and numbers more, who were for nothing more remarkable than a rich, full, and consistent display of the Lord Jesus. They proclaimed him in the dignity of his person—in the glory of his character—in the condescension of his grace—in the wonders of his love—in the efficacy of his sufferings—in the prevalency of his intercession—in his ability to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. They preached him as the only foundation of a sinner's

hope; as the Lord our righteousness and strength; as the consolation of Israel, in whom they were to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and, to use the expression of one of them, "Christ was the diamond in the bosom of all their sermons." And what was the practice of the apostles? "We preach Christ crucified," says Paul, "to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the wisdom of God, and the power of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Accordingly he viewed, and explained, and improved every thing in relation to *him*. If he spake of the glory of God, he represented it as "shining forth in the face of Jesus Christ." If he mentioned the promises of God, they were "all yea and amen in Christ Jesus." If he adverted to the duties and difficulties of the Christian life, he said, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." He could not enforce even conjugal tenderness, without a reference the most affecting: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." May we all follow an example so worthy of imitation; and wherever in our work we pause for reflection, may our consciences, bearing witness in the Holy Ghost, enable *us* also to say, "Whom *we* preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." But, that you may be a savor of Christ, there must be a regard to the *manner*, as well as to the *subject* of your preaching. The poet, in speaking of government. has said,

"Whate'er is best administered is best."

The same may be nearly said with regard to sermons. There is not such a marvellous difference between the thoughts and arrangement of one preacher and another as some imagine; but who has not been struck with the difference of the impression and effect? One man shall speak—and how dry, and sapless, and uninterested is he! Let another deliver the very same things, and there is a savor that gives them freshness; the things seem perfectly new. To know how to acquire this is a secret which I hope you are acquainted with. It is to live out of the spirit of the world, and to walk much with God alone; it is to keep conscience alive and awake; it is to maintain a deep sense of the value of the soul, and the importance of eternal salvation; it is to keep the mind in the things of God by habitual meditation; it is to cherish the devotional affections; it is to speak from the heart, to speak experimentally, to speak under a mixture of solemn and tender feelings; it is to speak with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, in answer to strong cryings and tears. When such a man, and under such an influence, engages in his work, he enters his congregation as Aaron went into the tabernacle to minister, when the precious ointment had been poured upon his head, and ran down to the skirts of his garments; he is found before he is either seen or heard, and we think of our Christian bard:—

"When one that holds communion with the skies
Has filled his urn where these pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings;
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
That tells us whence *his* treasures are supplied:
So when a ship, well freighted with the stores
The sun matures on India's spicy shores,
Has dropped her anchor, and her canvass furled,
In some safe haven of our western world;
'Twere vain inquiring to what port she *went*,
The *gale* informs us, laden with the *scent*."

XXI.—ON SOUND DOCTRINE.

BY THE REV. W. B. COLLYER, D. D

Sound doctrine—and this suggests an important inquiry after the sentiments which deserve to be so denominated. Every man arrogates to himself this distinction, and the most opposite principles claim the title of truth. The point can be settled only by an appeal to revelation, as the arbitrator between the pretensions of different systems. "To the law and to the testimony," the appeal must still lie; and to support the character of purity of doctrine, our sermons must be modelled upon primitive preaching. They must accord with the declarations of the Legislator, "even the

words of our Lord Jesus Christ." You must examine what he has advanced as essential, and what he has stated as indifferent, to determine what is binding and perpetual, and what may be considered as local and circumstantial. As you would be disinclined to lay a stress upon observances which he has not prescribed, so you will not presume to trifle with principles which he has established. By a diligent examination of his preaching and conduct, you will be able to determine what is really important.

Sound doctrine is not only that of Jesus, but of his apostles also. You will avoid the error of those who confine their attention exclusively to the sermons of our Lord, and thus circumscribe the circle of Christianity. These men appear to forget, that of these discourses we have a bare outline; and that the evangelists, who undertook rather to give a history of his life than an analysis of his sermons, have acknowledged that they have presented but a mere sketch of what he did; we cannot, therefore, imagine that they have recorded all that he said, which formed not the prominent feature in their design. It is only necessary to look at the addresses preserved, in order to determine that their spirit and purport are rather secured than their amplification, and that these are rather glanced at than produced in their fulness. St. John alone seems to have applied himself to the noting down his sayings, and the supplying some facts omitted by his preceding historians. How much light does his gospel, therefore, throw upon the peculiar doctrines of Christianity! and from him we learn, that it was not the intention of his Lord then to open the whole of his system. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." This was his language in the hour when he was separating himself from the world, and at the moment when he promised the Comforter, the Holy Spirit—who was not merely to bring all those things to their remembrance which he had spoken, but to "teach them all things." We look for the accomplishment of this promise in the inspiration of the apostles; and we find in the epistles the amplification of those doctrines, the faint outline of which was traced in the gospels. The apostles themselves (and it will not be said they assumed too much) affirm that their epistles possessed the authority of inspiration, entered essentially into the principles of Christianity, were necessary to the ratification and development of the great mystery of godliness, and that they had "the mind of Christ." They maintained that their word was the word of Jesus, and that he spake by them. So when St. Paul visited distant countries, it was remarked of his preaching, "that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus." He demands the supplications of the Thessalonians on behalf of his ministry in these terms:—"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you." We must gather sound doctrine, not merely from the precepts of Christ, but also from apostolic preaching, by which they were enforced and amplified.

Its character is finely drawn. It is "wholesome;" it heals the heart, and saves the soul. The speculations of philosophy may amuse—the gospel convinces and converts the spirit. To it the sinner looks for hope and pardon—the mourner for consolation—the doubtful for direction—the ignorant for information—the weak for energy—the timid for confidence; it becomes all things to all men. Unless the effect produced by our preaching be vital and lasting, we have reason to doubt its character.

It is "according to godliness;" it preaches sanctification, and produces purity. No doctrine can be deemed sound or scriptural, which has not this object in its discussion, and this effect in its influence. When our Lord distinguished between true and false teachers—when he said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves," he followed up his caution by a sure criterion, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." It is necessary that your preaching should have a practical tendency, otherwise it is unsound, worthless, and unsafe; and it is further necessary that your life should exhibit a corresponding degree of purity—that "the doctrine which is according to godliness" may be supported and illustrated by a holy example. Therefore "this commandment" requires not merely sound doctrine in the pulpit, but also in the character.

XXII.—ON A STRICT REGARD TO SOUND DOCTRINE.

BY THE RIGHT REV. D. WILSON, BISHOP OF CALCUTTA.

LET there be a conscientious adherence to the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, as contained in the whole body of the scriptures. Nothing sanctifies and saves but truth. The Holy Bible is the only storehouse of religious doctrine. An implicit and silent submission of the whole soul of a minister to the revealed will of the eternal and incomprehensible God, is indispensable to any enlarged success. Inspired men, speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost—handing down to a lost world all the revelation which Infinite Wisdom saw needful and best, and in the manner and form which was most suitable to the designs of God and the state of man—delivering to the church unmixed, and absolutely pure truth, without any defect, any omission, any superfluity, any exaggeration, any mistake—leaving us the standard of all doctrine, the rule of all practice, the example of all holiness; such is the Bible, the interpretation of which, and the application to the cases of men, is left as a solemn trust with the stewards of Christ's mysteries. Brethren, a revival of religion must spring from a revival of the authority of the Bible—a revival of the unlimited sovereignty of the Inspired Book, in overruling all the errors of men, in swaying every heart, in governing and curbing every imagination, in deciding every controversy, in being itself the element and matter of all our instructions in public and private. The divine medicine must not be adulterated and weakened by the admixtures of man, or our maladies will never be cured. The cup of salvation must not be corrupted with "the wine of Sodom, and the grapes of Gomorrah," or the wounds of men will remain unhealed. We must return to our Bibles. When the language and terms of this blessed book are perverted by heresies, we must draw up, indeed, forms of belief; when truth is calumniated, we must publish our confessions of faith; and when schism and division abound, we must have public models of doctrine and discipline, for the guidance of pastors and people; but these are not the Bible. By these we express our solemn opinion in brief upon particular points of truth, and protect the flock from the incursion of hirelings and false teachers; but the filling up of these outlines is to be taken from the Bible. We are to preach and expound, not the fallible summaries of man, but the infallible word of God.

And in doing this, three things are of the last importance. We must, first, seize the main commanding truths of scripture, as the apostles, in the concluding and finishing part of revelation, have summed them up. In every work, consisting of so many parts, this would be necessary; but in the Bible the inspired penmen have not left it in doubt, but have told us that Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God, is the centre and corner-stone of revelation. The glory of Christ, then, and the work of that Holy Spirit whom he has left with us as his representative and the great teacher of the church, these are the governing points, around which all other truths are arranged, and to which they are subordinate. If the minister does not seize this commanding discovery, in vain will he languish about other matters. If he once be brought, by personal contrition and faith, to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and to rejoice in him, he will soon find that he is possessed of the key to all the Bible, that he has discovered the pearl of unknown price, that he is enriched with unsearchable treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This doctrine of Christ, however, is not the mere repetition of the term Christ; it embraces, of course, all those truths which prepare the hearts of men for receiving him, and which teach them how to walk in him, and adorn his gospel. This doctrine joins on upon the fall and corruption of man, and the infinite evil of sin; it immediately holds by the person and operations of the Holy Ghost; it leads the experienced Christian to refer every blessing to the choice and merciful will of God, his heavenly Father; but still the prominent figure in our representations of Christianity must be Christ himself, in all his attributes and grace. A revived Christianity is a revived exhibition of the glorious person of Christ.

But, in connection with this main discovery, it is most important, secondly, to give their due place to all the other truths, even to the most slight and apparently inconsiderable ones, which the same inspired record contain. Not a verse in the Bible but has its weight. All the history, all the devotional parts, all the prophecies, all the biographies, all the examples, all the moral

maxims, all the precepts, demand, and will amply repay our attention. Things are stated, not abstractedly, but in life and action, and as they are to be applied to practice. The Bible is not a theoretical, speculative system; it is a system embodied, personified, exhibited, softened down, moulded to actual life and experience. We shall make the greatest mistakes, if we take out the main doctrines of revelation, and then presume to fashion, expound, apply them after our own notions. No; we must gather our manner of teaching Christ, the subordinate doctrines dependent upon him, the way of avoiding errors, the spirit and purpose for which he is to be preached, the different dispensations and various degrees of light which have attended his doctrine as the appointed Messiah and Saviour, the method of addressing the consciences of men, which patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles adopted—in short, we must gather all our knowledge from the Bible. Our ministry must, in all its parts, be the Bible expounded, amplified, applied. The greatest success of the pastor is uniformly found where there is most of God and least of man. Even the simplest principles of natural religion, the plainest moral maxims, the mere institutes of judicial legislation, the slightest ceremony, the very enumeration of genealogies, have some beneficial effect.

Add a third observation, brethren. Let us beware of human passion mingling with our expositions of the main doctrines of scripture, and with the subordinate topics which arise from them. Human passion will mingle; but let us beware. Let us overstate nothing; let us not exaggerate, magnify, strain matters; let "the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom." It is heat and controversy which inflame and divide the church. Wide differences of judgment must exist on a multitude of points gathered by the feeble reason of man from the Holy Scriptures; but these are of little moment if the commanding doctrines and the true spirit of Christianity are chiefly enforced, and if non-essential matters are not dogmatically and fiercely urged.

Dear brethren, let the Bible be our religion, our rule, our standard—the Bible in all its parts—the Bible in its unutterable mysteries—the Bible in every subordinate statement—the Bible, softly and graciously yielded to, and imprinted on a spirit of wisdom and meekness. When this is done, surely our God will descend upon us; the Spirit of grace will glorify his own truth; and the elements of the conversion of the world, accumulated in the diffusion of Bibles, and missionaries, and teachers, will be ready to burst into life and efficacy at the divine command. Let the Holy Saviour, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Scriptures, be our motto and rallying word in all we undertake or hope for.

XXIII.—HOLY EMULATION.

BY REV. T. BINNEY.

The warfare in which Christians are engaged, by the preaching and profession of the faith, is one of sublimest character and deepest interest: one proceeding from no secular ambition, exasperated by no earthly animosities; but one to which they are prompted by purest benevolence, and which is intended to terminate in transcendent results. It is not the war of a province,—nor a kingdom,—nor a continent,—nor even of a world,—it is that of the universe,—its seat is more immediately in the planet we occupy, but the compass of its concussions is commensurate with God's whole empire: it is the war of knowledge, purity, and rectitude—with every element and agency of evil; one, which other natures observe and in which they sympathize; they are said to be engaged in the contest and interested in the issue.

These representations, founded upon the facts and phraseology of scripture, strong and exaggerated as they may appear to some, are yet, we have reason to believe, far from adequate to the subject. Every Christian may apply them to himself, may sympathize in their spirit, and be animated by their influence. But by those who sustain the sacred character,—who, free from secular employments, are exclusively devoted to this "*work of God*," they are calculated to be felt with extraordinary emphasis. How is it, my brethren, we can lose either the elevation or the stimulus imparted to the mind by a serious view of the precise nature and end of our office? *If* it be true, that we live entirely for a purpose involving the sublimest interests of humanity; if we are engaged, *as leaders*, in the contest with evil; pre-eminently

called to prevent its advances and redeem its victims;—to increase the number of its opponents, to animate them in the conflict, and to lead a part to their eternal repose;—if this be true—if it be *not* the ebullition of a mistaken vanity, aggrandizing its office to appropriate the lustre and sanction its pretensions—then, by what *ingenuity* can we escape the predominance and impulse of a conception calculated to concentrate on itself every attribute of the intellect and the heart?—what firmness of purpose, what dignified enthusiasm, what moral magnanimity and intrepid zeal might with propriety be expected to distinguish *him* who, by the office he sustains, asserts his aim in life to be so singularly vast! He is a "*man of God;*" a denomination sublime but awful; denoting him to be peculiarly the property, presupposing his partaking much of the character, and implying an exclusive devotedness to the work of God. He is to conceive himself as constantly in the Supreme Presence, and to judge of every thing as he *would* judge were he actually there. He is called to contemplate man in the solemn relation he bears to eternity; to prepare him for that state where the mysteries of his being will be unfolded,—where the events of the present shall evolve in consequences of infinite duration! In looking on human nature, the minister of religion is to regard its essential and unchangeable elements, the attributes and capacities which attach to it irrespective of place or time; instead of being occupied by the accidental and the transitory, by wants, interests, and pursuits that arise from its present obscuration, which become important merely from this, and are to vanish with the circumstance from which they spring—he is perpetually to realize the period when this consummation shall have come, when nothing shall be left to man but the elementary principles of a moral being, modified, indeed, by those impressions that shall fix his destiny forever. He is required to regard the species as placed in circumstances of incalculable danger; as suffering from the consequences of some great catastrophe, and exposed to another irretrievable and vast. He lives for the very purpose of preventing this; for promoting the redemption of "a guilty world;" for recovering "that which is lost;" for "saving souls from death;" for "opening the eyes of the blind," arousing the attention of the careless, animating the hope of the penitent, and seeking the salvation of all. He lives to promote "all holy conversation and godliness," to inform the understanding, strengthen the virtue and sanctify the heart of those "who believe." To excite, animate, and encourage the most sacred ambition; to bring the light of eternity to bear upon life; to make *this* purify and prescribe—discover the insufficiency and detect the illusion of all the results and objects of concupiscence: to encourage a motive and an aim becoming an immortal creature,—a being possessed of reason, capable of virtue, and "born to God." Such a vocation is at once solemn and delightful; its responsibility is immense, but so its grandeur; and this thought may mitigate its pressure and allay its anxieties by inspiring an ardor in some degree adequate to the magnitude of the work. That there *is* a grandeur investing our position, may be further felt by adverting to the fact of our aim and solicitude being precisely those of the Saviour himself. This is equally true of the evangelist and the pastor. "We beseech men in Christ's stead," says the apostle, "to be reconciled to God;" "we sustain that office which *he* sustained, and are discharging its functions as *representatives* of him." The identity of aim between him and his servants is thus expressed with singular precision. It is involved, too, not only in the circumstance of his appointing the ministry—his giving pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints; but he is also said to have "given himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and present it to himself at last, a glorious church, not having either spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." When this result shall at length arrive, the emotion springing from the contemplation, will be participated by both. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied;" and the faithful minister, looking on the trophies of his personal success, shall, as one who has been associated with him in promoting the result, be permitted to sympathize in his sacred joy, and to share his sublime satisfaction. Surely, my brethren, considerations like these *ought* to be felt;—they ought to have some influence in promoting and purifying ministerial solicitude! To coincide in intention and pursuit with the Highest Nature,—to be connected, of course, with all pure, benevolent, and virtuous beings,—to be thus

supported, as it were, by the suffrages of the universe; to be animated by the voice, the consent, and the sympathy of the unfallen creation,—surely this *might* be expected to produce on all capable of thought impressions of no common order; to prompt purposes which nothing could defeat, and excite zeal which nothing could extinguish. Here is a sphere afforded for the sublimest ambition! There are various species of *laudable* ambition, which men may consistently imbibe. They may live for the diffusion of useful knowledge, the extension of rational liberty, or the cultivation of arts which improve and embellish existence. But these must of necessity be confined in duration and extent; confined to a life that "exhales like a vapor," and a world "that passeth away." There are kinds too of *perverted* ambition; distinctions have been sought that degrade their possessors; glory has been gained in this bad world by pre-eminence in deeds and attributes which can only be deemed worthy our indignant execration, or our deepest regret. But the ministry, which is intended to secure the perfection of the species, excites an ambition which it sanctifies; which is consistent with the principles of our nature and the will of God; and which, thus approved and sanctioned, will be as transcendent in its recompense as it is dignified in its aim. "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever."

XXIV.—AFFECTIONATE TENDERNESS.

BY THE REV. RALPH WARDLAW, D. D.

AFFECTIONATE tenderness is another important ingredient in the character of him who is *fit to teach;* a qualification this, indeed, of which nothing can compensate the want. A teacher of the gospel of grace and salvation, of the message of divine love and mercy to a lost world, destitute of melting affection for the souls of men! What a strange anomaly is this! Jesus wept over Jerusalem; Paul warned sinners night and day with tears. Among his fellow-believers he was gentle, as a nurse cherisheth her children; he was affectionately desirous of them, and willing to have imparted to them not the gospel of God only, but even his own soul, because they were dear to him. He exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of them, as a father doth his children, that they should walk worthy of God, who had called them unto his kingdom and glory. In a true imitator of Jesus and of Paul, there will be no frigid apathy, no listless indifference; but whether the immediate object of his preaching be the conversion of sinners, or the establishment of saints, he will speak from the fulness of a heart melting with compassion, and glowing with love; declaring momentous truth in the language of fervent feeling; uttering "thoughts that breathe" in "words that burn."

Wherever this tenderness of affection operates, it will be found in union with another temper of mind, not less necessary in him who must be *fit to teach*—I mean meekness. When our blessed Lord wished the laboring and heavy-laden to come unto him, he encouraged them by the assurance that he was meek and lowly in heart; a meek and lowly teacher; one who could have compassion on the ignorant, and those who were out of the way; who would graciously condescend to their infirmities; who would give them wisdom without upbraiding. And observe how Paul, in conformity to the character of his Master, draws that of the servant: "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

In this description the connection is particularly worthy of notice, in which *fit to teach* is introduced, marking the necessity of the meekness and gentleness of Christ as a constituent part of this fitness. The beautiful figure with which the song of Moses commences, seems to convey the idea not only of genial and refreshing influence, but of mild and placid gentleness: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."

XXV.—ON A PLAIN AND AFFECTIONATE MANNER OF PREACHING.

BY THE REV. CHARLES JERRAM, A. M., VICAR OF CHOBHAM.

THERE should be a correspondence in the style of our discourses, and our manner of delivering them, with the message with which we are intrusted, and the persons to whom it is to be addressed. And with regard to our language, it cannot well be too plain. If we are sent on an errand to the poor, we must speak to them in words which they can understand, or we shall speak to them in vain. Sufficient attention, I fear, is not paid to this point. Our education, our taste, and the society in which we have been brought up, naturally lead us to a polish in diction, and a refinement in discussion, which are not only lost upon our hearers, but prejudicial to their interests, for they have an affair in what we deliver,—it is their bread, their medicine, their comfort, their salvation. Surely, then, to such characters, and having so much at stake, we should "use great plainness of speech;" and how plain it ought to be, we may readily learn by a little conversation with the laborer in his barn, or the mother in her cottage. Alas! how little do they know of what is familiar to us! and with what difficulty shall we make them comprehend the plainest subjects, even when clothed in the simplest words! The vocabulary of a peasant is scanty in the extreme, and contains scarcely more than is sufficient to express the ideas suggested by his very limited sphere of observation, and the most common domestic wants and occurrences. To the process of reasoning, he is almost entirely a stranger; and he receives his impressions, not from the deductions of a chain of argument, but chiefly from incidents, sentences, aphorisms, comparisons, and pointed remarks; and however necessary it is for a Christian preacher, in order to avoid a perpetual repetition of trite observations, and to ensure an ultimate benefit to his audience, to arrange his matter in correct order, and to clothe it with a suitable variety of expressions; it is not from either that the greater part of his hearers derive their immediate advantage: and the difficulty consists in finding the due medium between refinement in argument and in style, and mere commonplace remarks, and vulgarity of language; so that a parochial minister will find, after he has finished his learned education, that he has a new science to acquire, and a new language to learn; and unless he study both, and that till he becomes a proficient, he will never be a successful preacher of the gospel to the poor. He must "write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it."

In addition to this indispensable attention to the style of our preaching, scarcely less regard is requisite to the manner of delivering our discourses. This ought to be marked by kindness and affection. We all know how much depends upon the grace of an action or address. If this be absent, the benefit may possibly be conferred, but the savor of it is lost; and when a prejudice is excited against a benefactor, little gratitude will be felt for the gift. There is, indeed, a peculiar unsuitableness in a cold and repulsive distance, when the very object of our mission is to comfort the mourner, and to heal them that are bruised. Both the persons to whom we are sent, the message we have to deliver, and the qualifications we have received for our office, imply and demand the tenderest sympathy; and in this, as in all other respects, the spirit and temper with which our Lord discharged his benevolent commission, should be imbibed by each of his ministers: no account indeed is given of the particulars of his discourse from our text, but the evangelist informs us of the result; for he says that "all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." May we then ever bear in mind, that the gospel is a message from the God of love: that its blessings were purchased by the love of Christ, and that its benefits are imparted by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and we shall see at once, that the ambassadors of this compassionate, triune God, never act in character, but when the law of love is in their hearts, and the language of it upon their lips. Oh! that we could each appeal to our several flocks as the apostle did to the Thessalonians, and say, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."

XXVI.—ON INTENSE ARDOR.

BY THE REV. RICHARD BAXTER.

STIR up yourselves to the great work of God, when you are upon it, and see that you do it with all your might. Though I move you not to a constant loudness, (for that will make your fervency contemptible,) yet see that you have a constant seriousness; and when the matter requireth it, (as it should do at the application at least of every doctrine,) then lift up your voice, and spare not your spirits, and speak to them as to men that must be awakened, either here or in hell. Look upon your congregations believingly, and with compassion, and think in what a state of joy or torment they must all be forever; and then methinks it should make you earnest, and melt your heart in the sense of their condition. Oh, speak not one cold or careless word about so great a business as heaven or hell! Whatever you do, let the people see that you are in good earnest. Truly, brethren, they are great works that are to be done, and you must not think that trifling will dispatch them. You cannot break men's hearts by jesting with them, or telling them a smooth tale, or patching up a gaudy oration. Men will not cast away their dearest pleasures upon a drowsy request of one that seemeth not to mean as he speaks, or to care much whether his request be granted. If you say that the work is God's, and he may do it by the weakest means; I answer, it is true he may do so; but yet his ordinary way is to work by means, and to make, not only the matter that is preached, but also the manner of preaching, to be instrumental to the work; or else it were a small matter whom he should employ, if a man would but speak the truth. If grace made as little use of the ministerial persuasion as some conceive, we need not so much mind a reformation, nor cast out the insufficient.

A great matter also with the most of our hearers, doth lie in the very pronunciation and tone of speech. The best matter will scarcely move them, if it be not movingly delivered. Especially see that there be no affectation, but that we speak as familiarly to our people as we would do if we were talking to any of them personally. The want of a familiar tone and expression is as great a defect in most of our deliveries as any thing whatsoever, and that which we should be very careful to amend. When a man hath a reading or declaiming tone, like a schoolboy saying his lesson, or an oration, few are moved with any thing that he saith. Let us, therefore, rouse up ourselves to the work of the Lord, and speak to our people as for their lives, and save them as by violence, pulling them out of the fire. Satan will not be charmed out of his possession; we must lay siege to the souls of sinners, which are his garrisons, and find out where his chief strength lieth, and lay the battery of God's ordnance against it, and ply it close till a breach be made: and then suffer them not by their shifts to make it up again; but find out their common objections, and give them a full and satisfactory answer. We have reasonable creatures to deal with, and as they abuse their reason against the truth, so they will expect better reason for it before they will obey. We must, therefore, see that our sermons be all-convincing; that we make the light of scripture and reason shine so bright in the faces of the ungodly, that it may even force them to see, unless they wilfully shut their eyes. A sermon, full of mere words, how neatly soever it be composed, while there is wanting the light of evidence, and the life of zeal, is but an image, or a well-dressed carcass. In preaching, there is intended a communion of souls, and a communication of somewhat from ours to theirs. As we and they have understandings, and wills, and affections, so must the bent of our endeavors be to communicate the fullest light of evidence from our understandings into theirs, and to warm their hearts by kindling in them holy affections, as by a communication from ours. The great things which we have to commend to our hearers, have reason enough on their side, and lie plain before them in the word of God; we should, therefore, be so furnished with all store of evidence, as to come with a torrent upon their understandings, and bear down all before us, and with our dilemmas and expostulations to bring them to a nonplus, and pour out shame upon all their vain objections, that they may be forced to yield to the power of truth, and see that it is great, and will prevail.

XXVII.—CONCERNING THE MOST USEFUL WAY OF PREACHING.

BY THE REV. A. H. FRANCK, D. D.

1. I MUST take it for granted that a minister, who sincerely desires, and who

likely to do good by his preaching, is such a one, both in heart and in life, as St. Paul describes, 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. "Who holds fast the form of sound words (or the pure apostolic doctrine) which he has heard, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus; and who keeps that good thing which has been committed to him by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in him."

2. It will not a little subserve the good ends proposed in the question, for a minister, very frequently, to lay in his sermons the distinguishing marks and characters both of the converted and of the unconverted, and that with all possible plainness, that so every one of his hearers may be able to judge of his own state, and may know to which of these two classes he belongs. But then great care must be taken that those distinguishing characters are justly drawn; for it may easily happen, through a preacher's unskilfulness in this affair, that the unconverted, on the one hand, may be deceived into a good opinion of their present state, and may grow thereupon more secure and careless; and that some converted persons, on the other hand, may be unreasonably disquieted and filled with groundless and fruitless fears. However, a prudent minister, who has experienced a work of grace upon his own heart, will have no great difficulty so to describe it to others, as sufficiently to guard against the mistakes on both sides, and to lead both one and the other, by the unerring light of scripture, into the knowledge of the true state of their own souls.

3. For this purpose also let a minister carefully and clearly distinguish in his preaching, betwixt mere morality and true religion; betwixt the moral honest man and the sound believer, who, from a deep conviction of the depravity of his nature and the errors of his life, has learned to hate sin from his heart, and lives by the faith of the Son of God. For it is hardly credible what multitudes of persons there are, even in Christian countries, where the gospel is publicly and faithfully preached, who, though they are wise enough in other matters, yet in this are they grossly ignorant, and thereby miserably deceive their own souls.

4. And, because this kind of self-deceit is so very common, it is highly necessary for a minister to instruct his hearers with all possible plainness in the duty of self-examination, and very often to exhort them to it; as more especially to inquire, if ever they were awakened from their natural sleep in sin? If they have escaped out of the snare of the devil? If ever they have had a lively and affecting sense of the corruption of their own hearts, and of the misery of their natural state? And, in short, whether they have good and solid reasons to conclude that they are regenerate persons? Whether they can find in themselves the genuine marks of a true conversion to God, and a living faith in Christ? &c. Or whether, on the other hand, they do not conclude that they are true Christians and in a state of salvation, merely from their being moral honest men, and their not living in any gross and scandalous sin? And, perhaps too, from their saying prayers, hearing sermons, and frequenting the places of public worship, and from their practising such like outward duties of religion? Or again, whether they do not flatter themselves that their eternal state is safe, merely because their lives are not altogether so bad as the lives of some others?

5. It would also be of very considerable use for a minister often to explain, and to show the difference betwixt a legal and an evangelical frame and principle of religion; or betwixt that slavish fear, by which alone it is that some persons, even of a serious turn of mind, are forced and dragged as it were to their duty, and that evangelical newness of spirit, that filial love to God and delight in his service, which usually grows and flourishes in the soul where it is once planted, and which produces a free, unconstrained, and acceptable religion. This would be an excellent means, not only of awakening sinners out of their carnal security, but of turning them thoroughly unto God, to a holy walk and to a pleasurable converse with him, even such as becomes his children. And for this end it is of very great moment, that a minister not only instruct his hearers what they must do, and how they ought to act, but that he also labor fully to apprize and to convince them, by the evidence of scripture, of their own native weakness and impotency for all that is spiritually good; and that he further show them, by the same word of truth, from whence they must look for, and from whom they may hope to receive all grace and strength, not only to renew their souls in the first conversion, but also afterwards

to enable them to perform every duty, as well of outward as of inward religion. They must be told that they can do nothing without Christ, according as he assured us, John xv. 5. "Without me ye can do nothing." And again, that by the help of his grace they may do all things, according as St. Paul writes, Phil. iv. 13. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Thus should gospel ministers constantly make it the aim and drift of their preaching, to lead their hearers to Christ, and to his grace; to him by "whose stripes we are healed," and whose blood takes away all the sins of all that truly repent and believe in the Lord Jesus; and to him by whose "divine power all things are given to us that pertain both to life and godliness," 2 Pet. i. 3. Thus the holy apostles preached; these were the topics which they insisted much upon; and if their example is not followed in this matter, it will be no wonder if our modern preaching comes vastly short of the success of theirs; and by this means some of our hearers will be in danger of sinking into a mere legal frame and spirit of bondage, while they are pressed to duty and working, but not encouraged by the grace of Christ, nor directed where to look for strength to perform it; and others of them will take up with a false peace, a carnal security, for want of being directed to Christ, who is the only foundation of the sinner's reasonable hope and solid comfort. But, on the other hand, when both these points are well explained and duly insisted on, no other means are so powerful to awaken secure sinners, to bring them to Christ, and to settle their souls in solid peace and comfort. Hereby, under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, they find themselves transported as it were into a new life; and now they go on with vigor and pleasure in the practice of universal piety.

6. It would further be useful, and it is highly necessary, that ministers should not only preach up the necessity of conversion, and instruct their hearers to depend on the grace of Christ for it, but also that they should, very frequently, in their sermons explain the nature and the whole progress of conversion, sometimes more largely and distinctly, and at other times more briefly, endeavoring thereby to lead their hearers into a true knowledge of the state of their souls; and showing them how they must repent of their sins, what they must do to be saved from their natural misery and ruin, and, in short, how they may obtain the full salvation of the gospel; that so every one may be able to give an answer to that most important question, "What must I do that I may be a child of God and inherit eternal life?" For let a minister entertain his hearers with the sublimest doctrines of Christianity, let him also declaim against sin and exhort them to their various duties in the most earnest and pathetic manner, and let all be adorned with the finest beauties of wit and eloquence; yet, after all, if his sermons are not so contrived and framed as, at the same time, to inform the ignorant how they may obtain an interest in the gospel salvation for themselves, and what means and methods God has appointed for that purpose; what will it profit them? No more than a parcel of shreds of cloth of various dyes, though they were of the finest thread and liveliest colors, would serve the purpose of a man who wants a handsome garment; whereas a sermon that informs the ignorant sinner, not only of the necessity of conversion, but also how that happy change may certainly be effected in his own soul, may not unfitly be compared, in respect to its usefulness, to a complete garment, made all of a piece, well fitted to the man's shape that wants it, and which he may therefore put on and wear with honor and pleasure.

But now, in order to all this, a minister must take pains with his own heart, as well as in composing his sermons; he must have a zeal for Christ, and must aim at nothing so much as to bring sinners to him. This should be in some measure the design and drift of every sermon that he preaches, that so if a person should happen to hear him but once in all his life, he might even, by means of that one sermon, get some notion of the one thing needful, and be just entered at least into the way of salvation. For this should every minister study and strive, and for this should he continually pray that God would fill his heart with pious zeal and holy wisdom, that so he may divide the word of truth aright, and minister grace unto his hearers.

7. It might probably make some good impressions on the minds of the people, were a minister pretty often to inculcate, with great plainness and seriousness, the necessity of prayer; and more particularly

what need they have to pray very earnestly to the God of grace that he would set home his word upon their hearts, that he would bring the good seed to perfection in their full and blessed conformity to himself. And further, so great is the ignorance of many persons concerning the duty of prayer, that they seem to have no other notion of it than merely a reading some forms out of a prayer-book. This makes it to be as necessary, as it would properly be a useful thing for a minister to lead them, as it were, by the hand, into this path of duty; that is, to explain it to them in a most easy and familiar manner, to show them that it requires no great art and skill to pray acceptably unto God; for they are to speak to him as children to a loving father, they are to spread before him their sorrows and complaints, they are to tell him of the state and condition of their souls, just as they find and feel it; and they need not be at all solicitous about propriety of expression and elegant phrases in their secret prayers; for God regards the sense of the heart, rather than the language of the lips. The scriptures themselves furnish us with several examples of such artless and yet acceptable prayers. Let a minister then diligently instruct his hearers how they are, in the first place, to get their hearts disposed for prayer; and it may be of use too to assist and furnish the more ignorant with words and fit expressions; but at the same time let him inform them that they need not tie themselves to use those very words, nor any form whatever; but that they should learn to pour out their hearts unto God, in such words by which they can best express the real sentiments and affections of their own souls, according to the Psalmist, Psalm lxii. 8, "Ye people, pour out your hearts before him."

8. It is further extremely necessary that ministers should very often take occasion to explain in their sermons that renewing or change of the mind, which is so essential to all true religion, and which yet, alas! but very few persons seem to understand, or indeed to have almost any notion of. Nor is it enough to explain that first and mighty change, which is at once made in a sinner at his conversion, when he comes to love that good which before he hated, and to hate that evil which he before loved; when from being an unbeliever he becomes a believer; or when his false and dead faith is changed into a true and saving one: but that further progressive change should also be much recommended, in which the Christian must be improving to the very end of his life, which St. Paul refers to, 2 Cor. iii. 18. But now the veil which was upon the heart being taken away, and the Spirit of the Lord having taken up his dwelling in it, verses 16, 17, "we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord." Hereby the mind is more and more renewed, the Christian grows up in the spirit and temper of Christ, and his lovely image is drawn upon the soul in fairer lines every day than other.

9. It is of considerable moment also that the whole faith and duty of a Christian be represented in its most amiable and attractive light, that so sinners may be won to religion upon a full conviction, that if they would do well for themselves and obtain true peace and comfort, the shortest, the surest, and indeed the only way is to turn in good earnest from sin to God and holiness; and that religion is by no means a grievous and melancholy thing, which any may need be afraid of, but full of pleasure and greatly desirable even for its own sake: and though it calls us, indeed, to a present combat, and requires us to fight and strive against sin; yet this is but in order to peace and to a certain victory, which will much more than recompense the toils of the war.

10. It were much to be wished that ministers would not take up more of their sermons than needs must in explaining their text, but rather, after as short an explication of it as is sufficient to lead their hearers into the true sense and meaning, (which must by no means be neglected,) hasten to the application; and in that, let a minister address himself to his hearers with a becoming seriousness and earnestness; let him apply his subject both to saints and sinners, to the converted and to the unconverted, in order to awaken the secure and careless, and to build up true believers in their faith and holiness. Experience would soon show that this is by far the more profitable way, than to spend almost the whole discourse, as some do, in explaining their text and subject, and then close with a very short application, because the time is gone

11. It were also greatly to be wished, that those under-shepherds of the flock of Christ would make it more designedly and zealously the purpose of their preaching to bring sinners to him, who is the great Shepherd of the sheep; that they would strive by the most winning arguments they can possibly use, and especially by such as the grace of the gospel will naturally suggest, to persuade and even to compel them to come to him. As the hen when she lights on a few crumbs or grains of corn; how earnestly does she invite her brood to come and share the treasure with her! She will by no means be satisfied or leave off calling them till they come. Thus did our blessed Saviour; how graciously did he call and invite sinners to come to him in the days of his personal ministry upon earth! As Matt. xi. 28: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," &c. Again, John vii. 37, 38: "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink: he that believeth on me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And much to the same purpose we find him speaking in several other places. Thus also we hear the prophet Isaiah, in the Old Testament, inviting sinners unto Christ, Isaiah lv. 1: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c.; and thus St. Paul, in the New Testament, 2 Cor. v. 11: "We beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And thus doth the Apostle John over and over in his divine writings. Remarkably to this purpose also are those words of our blessed Saviour concerning Jerusalem, Matt. xxiii. 37: "How often would I have gathered thy children, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" Christ called sinners to come to himself, as their proper Lord and Master, as their only Redeemer and Saviour; whereas we, says St. Paul, preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, 2 Cor. iv. 5, and therefore we endeavor to bring sinners not to ourselves, but to Him. But now in order to this, and that a minister may be thus happily successful in his preaching, he must not only sincerely love his people, and have an affectionate concern for their salvation, but he must be an ardent lover of Christ too; he must wish and desire and covet nothing so much as to bring all that hear him to Christ, to deliver every one of them, as it were, into his gracious arms, could he but persuade them to be so happy; that thus they may learn, even by the example of their minister, to love the Lord Jesus.

12. For this purpose it is further requisite that a minister should very often take occasion to display, in the most lively colors that he can, the excellency and glory of Christ's person, the kindness of his heart, and the exceeding riches of his grace, both as he is God and man, as he is now a glorious triumphant Saviour, as well as once he sustained and executed the same office in an humbled and suffering state. And that he further inform his hearers what excellent blessings are treasured up in Christ to be bestowed on all his friends and people, that so they may be drawn to him by a principle of desire and love, that they may most willingly give him their hearts; and that so it may be the breathing of their souls and the matter of their most earnest prayer to Christ, that he would be pleased to manifest his love to them, that he would "shed it abroad in their hearts by his Holy Spirit," Rom. v. 5, that he would more and more reveal to them the glory of his majesty, that he would impress and affect their minds with a lively sense of it, that so they may yet more and more love and honor him their heavenly spouse, by whom it is that they have, and that they further hope for access to and acceptance with the Father, and with whom they also hope to dwell forever and ever.

13. The love of Christ ought to be much more insisted on by preachers than what is commonly done; because when we apply to ourselves in a right manner his passion, death, and atonement, his merits, and that purchase of salvation which he hath made for us, the knowledge of his love to us, and of our pardon and justification through faith in his blood, is the truest spring and most powerful attractive of our love to him. Now the more we love Christ, and that for this very reason, because he first loved us, the better will every other branch of our religion flourish, every other grace and every duty will then flow from its proper fountain; and therefore the more a minister endeavors to instil this principle of sacred love into the hearts of his hearers, the more comfortable success will he probably see of his labors, in their spiritual improvement and growing obedience to the gospel.

But especially, and in the first place, le

every minister look to his own heart; and see to it that he himself loves Christ fervently, lest he should be as "the sounding brass and as the tinkling cymbal," which the apostle speaks of, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. And besides, without a sincere love to Christ in his own soul, there will be little probability of his recommending him effectually to the love of others. It is not enough for him to preach a great many sermons upon the love of Christ, and to exhort his hearers to love him; for if his own heart is not warmed with this sacred love, his discourses on that subject will be apt to be cold and lifeless, and therefore unprofitable and fruitless. Nothing could be more pertinently answered in a few words, to one that asked another, How he might learn to be a good and useful preacher? than this, *Si multum ames Christum*, You must learn to be a zealous lover of Christ.

But then let it be further noted, that sincere love to Christ will always express itself not only in words, but by suitable or correspondent actions. So our Saviour has taught us, John xv. 14: "Ye are my friends," said he, "if ye do whatsoever I command you;" i. e. this is the best and most substantial evidence of your sincere friendship, and that you truly love me.

14. I reckon also the duties of self-denial and weanedness from the world and its carnal pleasures, and, in short, from all the present things of sense and time, to be among those more important and necessary subjects which ministers should often preach upon, oftener indeed than most of them do. These are subjects which our Saviour Christ, when he was a preacher upon earth, very much insisted upon in his sermons, as you may see particularly in Matt. xvi. 24, 25, 26, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, &c., yea and his own life also," i. e. in comparison of me, "he cannot be my disciple." And how needful are these subjects now! For alas! how many persons are there, who can talk well about Christ and religion, nay, who carry a fair appearance of virtue and godliness, and who perform many outward duties with reputation and honor, and yet not having learned to deny themselves, their love of the world not being sufficiently mortified, they are easily overcome in a day of trial, and sacrifice their religion and their souls to their worldly interest. Let self-denial then be earnestly recommended, and that, not merely as a moral virtue or philosophical attainment, I mean not upon such principles only as the heathen moralists used to insist upon; but let it be recommended and urged as a Christian grace, as that which flows chiefly from love to Christ, even such a love as will make us ready to deny ourselves the pleasures, riches, and honors of this world, all manner of sensual gratifications, and our very lives themselves, ἕνεκεν ἀυτοῦ, for his sake, as Christ not only expects but requires of us, Matt. xvi. 25.

15. Though the diligent reading of the scriptures themselves, even the inspired writings of the prophets and apostles, and the very words of our Saviour Christ, should be chiefly recommended, as they are undoubtedly far preferable to any other books of mere human composure; yet besides these, a minister may very profitably recommend to his hearers some other good books of religion, both ancient and modern, to be read by them at home in their own closets or families; such books, I mean, as are written in a truly evangelical strain, and with a spirit of lively devotion and piety, which would be no inconsiderable means, both of preserving and nourishing the fire of divine love in their hearts. I might mention by way of instance, *Martin Statius's Lutherus Redivivus*, which is nothing else but an abridgment of Luther's works, in which the most considerable passages are collected into a narrow room, and such passages more especially, as have the most direct and powerful tendency to awaken and to excite the minds of men to lively practical religion. However, I mention this but as one instance, out of a great many very excellent and useful books which the providence of God has now furnished his church withal, and which we ought to account as a precious treasure to it. And further, let not any minister think that it is the people only who are to be profited in their souls by the reading such good books, while all the use that he is concerned to make of them for himself, is only to form his style by reading them, or to borrow thoughts from them, or it may be to steal sermons out of them, (which is shamefully the practice of too many preachers;) but he should read them, chiefly and in the first

place, with a view to his own spiritual edification. He should endeavor so to use and improve the gifts which God has bestowed on other men, as that his own soul may be the better for them, as well as the souls of the people to whom he preaches.

16. Once more, let faithful ministers by no means forget to recommend it to their hearers, that they would familiarly acquaint themselves and converse with serious, lively, and growing Christians, and with such more especially as excel in the gift and spirit of prayer; for as a live coal kindles another that is cold and dead, so will the savory discourse, the fervent prayers, and the holy conversation of warm and lively Christians, be a probable means of kindling the same fire of divine love in the souls of dead sinners; or at least of nourishing and improving the sacred flame in the hearts of their more intimate Christian friends. Ministers should therefore do all they can to promote such Christian conversation amongst the more serious part of their hearers: observing however the rules of necessary prudence, particularly that of the apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 40, "Let all things be done decently and in order." They should exhort them as St. Paul does the Colossians, Col. iii. 16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord;" to which pious purpose that large and rich treasure of sacred hymns, both ancient and modern, with which God has graciously blessed his church, is not a little conducive, for which therefore we are bound to render him immortal praises.

XXIX.—ON WINNING SOULS.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH BENSON, A. M.

By the metaphorical expression here used in the original, the wise man seems to allude to the *catching of birds, or fish, or the taking of a city* strongly fortified. And perhaps, without incurring the danger of being deemed very fanciful, I might make use of these comparisons to illustrate my subject. I might observe that the minds of men while in their natural state, like birds, are light, inconstant, and trifling, winged, indeed, furnished with affections, that they may ascend towards heaven, but loading those affections with thick clay with the love of sin and vanity, of money honor, pleasure—with worldly desires and cares, and sinking down to earth; in consequence of which, they are entangled in the mud and filth of it, and "caught alive in the snares of the devil, and led captive by him at his will."

Now in order that "God may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of Satan's snare," they must, first, be *alarmed* with faithful representations of the danger they are in while unconverted. They must be given to know that, while in a fallen state, a state of ignorance and sin, of guilt, depravity, and weakness, they are the subjects, the servants, nay, the children of Satan; joint heirs with him of future wrath; to which wrath it must be proved to them they are continually exposed, being continually on the verge of death and eternity. When we have reason to believe they are awakened to a due sense of their danger, and brought to be seriously concerned about eternal things, they must, secondly, be *allured*, by unfolding the precious promises of God made to them, if in true repentance and faith, they return unto him. A free and full pardon for all their past sins, the especial favor and love of God, adoption into his family, and regeneration by his grace, the indwelling of his sanctifying Spirit, and communion with him from day to day, together with his peculiar care and protection, must be set before them, and offered to them "without money and without price." These privileges they must be assured may be enjoyed on earth, while eternal life, felicity, and glory, are laid up for them after death, in the heavenly, everlasting kingdom of their God and Father.

Again, that they may make more haste to embrace these blessings, they must, thirdly, be *drawn* with the cords of love, the love of God in Christ Jesus, and the bands of a man, viz. solid reason and argument. "God so loved the world," must be our language, "that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Herein," must we cry, "is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and made his only-begotten Son a propitiation for our sins." "For when we were

under condemnation, and exposed to wrath, and without strength to help ourselves, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly." "Now scarcely for a righteous man," we must argue, "will one die; although, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." In this way did the apostles address themselves to the guilty, doubtful, and despondding children of men. Thus did they draw them unto the Lord Jesus, and bring them to experience the constraining power of love divine. Thus did Christ himself draw mankind unto himself. Being "lifted up" upon the cross for lost sinners, being "wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities, and bearing in his own body on the tree, the chastisement of our peace," he led them to reflect on their own sinfulness and guilt, and thus to judge that "if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again." And in this we must imitate our Lord and his apostles. We must direct sinners to "behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world;" and to "look upon him whom they have pierced," that they may mourn for those sins which were the causes of his sufferings, and vow to crucify those lusts which crucified the Son of God. In the mean time, like him, his prophets, and apostles, we must reason with them concerning the nature, excellency, and necessity of true religion, and demonstrate how little they will be "profited, if they should gain even the whole world, and lose their own souls;" and show what a poor recompense any temporal acquisitions, however valued and coveted, will be for the loss of heavenly riches; and what a small consolation the recollection of past temporal pleasures will be to them, while suffering the tortures of eternal pains.

If, after all, they linger, they must, fourthly, be *driven* with the threatenings of the word of God, as with a drawn sword. The fiery law of the Most High must be disclosed, flashing conviction into the guilty breast, and thundering forth its curses from Sinai, amidst blackness, and darkness, and tempest, upon the unholy and profane. Its *precepts* must be unfolded in all their spirituality, extent, and obligation; and its *threatenings* denounced in all their miseries and woes, against every violator of it. "Cursed," must we testify, "is every one that continue'h not in all things that are written in the book of the moral law to do them." And lest they should suppose that the gospel is less holy than the law, makes more allowance for sin, and shows more mercy to impenitent sinners going on in their trespasses—its more dreadful threatenings must also be declared, in all their awful and tremendous terrors. "He that believeth not," we must witness, "shall be damned;" "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." "For this," we must testify, "is the condemnation," the reason of the just condemnation of those that perish, "that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." We must exhort them, therefore, "to give the more earnest heed to the things which they have heard, lest at any time they should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels," (viz. the law delivered on Sinai by their ministry,) "was steadfast, and every transgression and act of disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall they escape," we must demand, "who neglect so great salvation" as is offered in the gospel? A salvation "which began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." "He that despised the law of Moses," we must remind them, "died without mercy under two or three witnesses;" and we must leave them to judge, "of how much sorer punishment," it is certain, "they shall be thought worthy, who trample under foot the Son of God, count the blood of the covenant a common thing, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace." "See then," we must urge, "that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not that turned away from him that spake on earth, much less shall we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven; whose voice," we must proceed, "then shook the earth; but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake, not the earth only,

but heaven also." This time of terrible shaking, when Jehovah will arise, in all his wrath, "to shake terribly the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the dry land, to shake all nations;" and when he who ought to be "the desire of all nations," "shall come the second time without sin, shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;"—this awful day of final judgment, "when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all its works shall be burnt up," must be displayed in all its terrors; and "Who among you," we must ask, "can bear this devouring fire? Who among you can dwell with these everlasting burnings?"

These awful discoveries are intended to drive men to Christ, "the hope set before them," that they may take sanctuary in him, as the manslayer did in the city of refuge, when pursued by the avenger of blood. But if we find that instead of having this effect, they rather drive them from him, and that, viewing him as a Lawgiver and Judge, rather than as a Redeemer and Saviour, they are terrified under a sense of their sinfulness and guilt, and are afraid to approach him; we must endeavor to encourage them to "draw near with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith." We must set before them discoveries of his boundless mercy and love, and of his infinite compassion for their manifold infirmities, and must give them assurances of a welcome reception, and of "grace to help in time of need." And we must exhort them, in dependence on this grace, to "strive to enter in at the strait gate; to work out their salvation with fear and trembling; and to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure."

That they may find no possible way of escaping, we must endeavor to close them in on all sides. The preachers of the gospel, we must remember, are "fishers of men;" and the gospel they preach is like "a net cast into the sea." This net, formed of the various doctrines, precepts, promises, threatenings, and exhortations of the word of God, we must make strong, by arguments drawn from all quarters, from nature, providence, and grace; from things visible and invisible, temporal and eternal; and must unfold and spread it over the souls of men. And then, by applying the word which we have explained, must, as it were, "close the net upon them," that they may indeed be *caught*, so as not to escape; and may be drawn out of the sea of this world, before it becomes a lake of fire burning with brimstone, to the land of life and immortality.

To use one metaphor more, which also seems manifestly to be alluded to in the text. Souls must be won as a *city*, *tower*, or *stronghold*, possessed and garrisoned, is won, when it is taken from the enemy. Satan has many strongholds in many particular families, or individuals, whom, as having peculiar influence, through their learning, wealth, or authority, he labors hard to fortify with unbelief and sin, and to possess and garrison by a diabolical agency, that through them he may more easily subdue and retain others in his power. Now even these forts, and towers, and citadels of the prince of darkness may be taken. "Compel them to come in," says Jesus; but how? By fire and fagot? By persecution? No; but by reason and scripture, by the word and Spirit of God, by faith and prayer, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down the strongholds of Satan, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Upon the whole, those that would win souls must first be deeply concerned to win them, from a sense of their immense value; and this concern must appear in the whole of their deportment, in all their tempers, words, and works. This will induce them, on the one hand, to use their utmost efforts to accomplish an end they have so much at heart; and, on the other, carefully to shun and guard against whatever would obstruct the accomplishment of it. Secondly, they must show that they are won themselves, and must give full proof of their conversion to God, and regeneration through his grace, by their deadness to sin, their heavenly dispositions of mind, and their watchfulness and circumspect walking. They must be examples to mankind, in all holiness and righteousness from day to day. They must, thirdly, use the means which God hath appointed, in order to this end, and in particular, reproof, exhortation, and doctrine. And as "servants of the Lord, they must not strive," must not contend, but must "be gentle toward all men, patient, and apt to

teach, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; that they may be saved." I shall only add here, that another and most important means to be used is that of prayer—fervent, constant, persevering, and faithful prayer. For as to winning souls, of ourselves we can do nothing. "Not by wisdom, nor by might," is this great work accomplished, "but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." "The help that is done upon earth, he doth it himself;" and he accordingly must be sought unto in earnest prayer, that he may do it.

XXX.—ENGLISH AND AMERICAN PREACHING.

(FROM THE CONGREGATIONAL MAGAZINE.)

THE truths of the gospel, although simple and elementary in themselves, may be presented to the attention of mankind in a great variety of ways. In illustrating and in applying them, every order of talent may be called into exercise, and still an exhaustless field of observation and inquiry be left untrodden.

Eighteen hundred years have rolled away since the command first went forth, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" and since then, by innumerable methods, and through the most diversified agency, these truths have been unceasingly pressed upon the attention of mankind. The most splendid genius, and the humblest talent, have been alike consecrated to the work, and a multitude, whom no man can number, of every tongue, and out of every nation and people, have been gathered into the fold of the Redeemer. Still it must be allowed, that the progress of the gospel has not been commensurate with the well-grounded expectations of the church. Compared with what might have been expected, it has wrought but "little deliverance in the earth."

Various circumstances, into which it is not possible for us now to enter, may have contributed to this melancholy result. The feeble and inefficient manner in which the appointed means of grace have been hitherto brought to bear upon the conversion of the world is not one of the least prominent. It may startle, but we really think it very questionable, whether at the present day, in our own country, a moral power is employed upon the unconverted equal to that which was in exercise centuries ago. To illustrate, we need not go further back than to the period of the Reformation. Every one acquainted with history is aware of the surprising change which, in those days, preaching effected in the moral and religious state of England. During the comparatively short period which elapsed between the reigns of Edward VI. and Charles I., the whole nation, by an apparently weak instrumentality, was brought out of the thick darkness of Popery into the light of Protestantism, and no small proportion of our countrymen were blessed with a saving knowledge of the gospel. It is quite clear that preaching has no such hold now on the common people. It is difficult to induce them to enter a place of worship, and still more difficult to impress or interest them when there. Strange as it may appear, we are firmly persuaded that the art of preaching was much better understood then than it is now Our sermons, like our furniture, have it is true undergone the various modifications to which time and fashion subject all things, and many, no doubt, think they are much improved; but we very greatly question whether they answer the end better, if so well, as the old ones. We know of no modern sermons, except Whitfield's, (to which, indeed, they bear some resemblance,) so well calculated to impress the popular mind as good old Latimer's. There is a freshness, an inexplicable charm about them, admirably suited to interest the most stupid, and to awaken the reflective faculty in the most uncultivated. Of Whitfield's sermons we cannot speak too highly. We fully agree with the late Dr. Edward Williams, of Rotherham, (no mean judge,) when he expresses his belief, that "there are no sermons in the English language capable of exciting the pious passions—of inspiring the soul with holy transport—of admitting warmth and energy of delivery—to the degree of his compositions." We have often been astonished to hear persons say, they heard Whitfield's sermons without being able to see any merit in them; such remarks have always appeared to us to arise from mistaken views as to what a sermon should be.

We maintain that a sermon, however

full of thought, ought invariably to be vernacular and colloquial. The old wives' tales, which the Reformers were in the habit of introducing into their discourses, were suited to the age, and, ridiculous as they may appear now, they were not without their use. Their images might sometimes be mean, but then they were familiar, and they took hold. This conversational style of address was kept up by the successors of the Reformers; and even Barrow, South, and Jeremy Taylor, do not scruple to use figures which would now be considered as below the dignity of the pulpit. To these familiar exhortations succeeded the long, heavy, but still familiar and heart-searching discourses of the Puritans. They could preach by the hour-glass, and turn it twice, too, without tiring their hearers. After the Restoration, a cold, logical, and highly-polished form of address prevailed, and now, for the first time, preaching lost nearly all its influence over the people. The rural population relapsed into little short of barbarism, and the more polished inhabitants of the towns became profane scoffers, or heartless speculatists. Whitfield and his coadjutors at length broke upon the slumberers like a thunderbolt. Multitudes were alarmed; sleepy consciences were awakened; convictions of sin seized upon thousands; "the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent took it by force." The efforts of this wonderful man, and the success which attended his labors, had the effect of greatly modifying pulpit oratory. The stilts were partially thrown aside, and from that day to this they have never been thoroughly resumed. Of late years a new style has sprung up amongst us—a dash of literature has been thrown into our divinity; and if a sermon be "interesting," "in good taste," or "eloquent," the preacher will commonly be pardoned by the politer portion of his audience for having been somewhat unintelligible to the vulgar. We are not advocating extemporaneous, much less unpremeditated effusions. We have no objection to a sermon being written, provided the object of writing be to condense thought, or to attain a clear, perspicuous style; it is only when writing is abused to the purposes of literary ambition that we condemn and abhor it. The ambitious style of preaching, which with many, very many, honorable exceptions still too much prevails, may, we think, be traced in part to the influence of the press. Everybody publishes now-a-days, and popular sermons which read well become the models on which young ministers form the style of their pulpit addresses. The fact is, a sermon, properly so called, ought seldom if ever to be printed. It is by no means the best way of communicating theological truth, and is, in its immediate consequences, ruinous to ease and efficiency in the pulpit. Let treatises be printed, but let sermons be preached. If preaching the gospel be persuading men, alike by the terrors and loving-kindness of God, to be reconciled to their Maker, he preaches best who uses that method which is best calculated to persuade his hearers to attend to the truths he sets before them. The language of persuasion is necessarily colloquial; it implies a great deal of repetition, and of the most familiar illustration; it has much to do with the head, but still more with the heart. It despises all the tricks of rhetoric. Who ever set seriously about persuading his friend to pursue any particular course, with regard to this world's interests, by the skilful management of nicely balanced periods? What language would any one think under such circumstances of employing, but that of deep, impassioned earnestness? What barrister of any eminence, except with a view to the press, ever addressed a jury of uneducated countrymen in the way that many ministers preach to equally uneducated congregations? How careful is he that every argument he uses be understood! How skilfully does he go over his ground again and again, lest any should mistake, or fail to comprehend his meaning! How frequently does he repeat, without wearying by repetition! How vividly does he depict! How tenderly does he appeal! How eagerly he seizes upon every illustration which he thinks likely to answer his purpose, and how anxiously does he avail himself of every local association which is calculated to affect their minds; until conscious, by the expression of their countenances, that they at length thoroughly comprehend his statements, he sits down with the conviction, that whatsoever be the result of his efforts, he has at least fulfilled his duty towards his client. But, alas! "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

Intimately connected with the evil of which we have complained, is the custom of preaching great sermons, as they are sometimes called, chiefly for the purpose of subserving the interests of some general or local charity. Were a stranger from some unknown planet to come down into our streets, he would suppose, from the numerous placards that would meet his eye, announcing sermons on special occasions by eminent divines, that we were truly a most religious people. He would find every bookseller's shop filled with "just published" discourses; the very Sunday papers he would see catching the infection, and sanctifying their columns by biographical details of living ministers; the print-shops he would observe to swarm with reverend heads of all shapes and sizes; and as he watched criticisms on preachers and preaching pass from newspapers to magazines, and from magazines to social circles, until the whole religious world was in motion to settle the respective claims of the Paul and Apollos of the day, he would say, Surely this people have rightly learned to estimate the value of an immortal soul! How would he be startled at the subsequent discovery, that all this parade and publicity was but a cunning device of the wicked one, to blunt the edge of that weapon which in its simple foolishness is destined to overthrow his empire.

But, seriously, we know of nothing which has had a greater tendency to lower the ministerial office—to reduce ambassadors for Christ to candidates for popular favor—to sear the consciences of the unconverted, and to ruin the simplicity of preaching, than the practice to which we have adverted. Under the influence of no better principle than curiosity, crowds of unthinking hearers are gathered every Sabbath to listen to the man who is fortunate enough to be esteemed their favorite; and because he preaches evangelically, everybody rejoices to see the crowd assembling, forgetful that there is a shield of brass around the consciences of such auditors, which renders them impervious to the ordinary means of grace, and that nothing short of a special miracle can carry a word of conviction to their souls. But we have said enough on a subject, the contemplation of which disposes us rather to weep than to write.

We pass on to another great impediment to the preaching of the gospel, and one which is scarcely less fatal—the prevalence of mistaken views with regard to the nature of divine influences. A notion has taken possession of many minds, that because the influences of the Holy Spirit are necessary to incline the heart to receive the testimony of God, there is little reason to expect that, under ordinary circumstances, any considerable number of persons will be persuaded to submit to divine truth through their feeble instrumentality; and under such a persuasion, it is frequently presented for the acceptance, and pressed upon the attention of the multitude, rather because God has commanded it, than with any expectation of success. The guilty disinclination of man to repent and believe the gospel has been unhappily termed moral inability, and confounded with natural incapacity; and good and faithful men, who would shrink from the very suspicion of Antinomianism, have preached to their fellow-men with as little hope of benefiting them as if they were preaching to the winds. This was not the way in which the apostles acted when they began to declare the word of God in Jerusalem; and those who imagine that the Spirit of God is honored by such faithlessness, "do err, not knowing the scriptures."

The same wretched delusion operates to an incalculable extent in preventing the exercise, by churches, of that available moral influence which, when called forth for worldly purposes, is irresistible. Why should not the same mysterious power, which mind exercises over mind in the affairs of this world, be a legitimate agent in the hands of the Holy Spirit for exciting the inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" We will give a familiar illustration: During a contested election, especially in a country town, how commonly do men of the most sober judgments find themselves carried away, contrary to their previous determinations, and giving up their time and energies for the attainment of an object which, after all, so far as they are concerned, is of very trifling importance! Inquire into the source of this excitement, affecting, as it does, in a greater or less degree, every inhabitant of a town, and it will probably be found in the wishes, and consequent efforts, of two or three individuals, for the whole contest was possibly at first a matter of perfect indifference to every one else. When feeling has subsided, we lament that

so much energy has been thrown away on a matter of no moment; but the amount of the forces which have been employed may be visible for years afterwards in heart-burnings, which prove that the feelings and emotions of many a soul have been stirred up from their inmost depths. Now, all this moral influence is perfectly natural and within human attainment. When exerted in the cause of justice and humanity it is invaluable, and the liberties of a country seem at some seasons to depend on the degree in which it can be called forth. Apply, then, the same forces in the cause of religion. Let the minister, and three or four members of his church, solemnly resolve to call the attention of every unconverted hearer in their place of worship to the concerns of eternity. Let them be influenced only by this motive, "we believe, and therefore do we speak;" and, putting aside all idea of the fear or favor of man, let them act and react upon each other, and upon their fellow-worshippers, with just the same degree of earnestness which the men of this world use when the interests of a favorite candidate are at stake; and who can tell but that results would follow far greater and more important than can be calculated. But why should such an influence be confined merely to those who assemble within the walls of perhaps a small church or chapel? Why not go forward to their friends and neighbors, and with the same kindling of eye, and intelligent speech, and persuasive accent, and deep earnestness, which they would employ were temporal interests at stake, urge upon them the importance of an immediate consideration of the question, "Am I a friend or an enemy of God?" The world might count them mad, but God would support them by his smile. We verily believe that the only reason why the gospel is not universally diffused is, because the churches do not act as if they believed eternal things. The unhappy and unscriptural notion to which we have referred has, in many cases, been the opiate by which conscience has been soothed, and the claims of Christian obligation laid quietly to rest. Much more than has ever yet been effected remains to be accomplished, before the churches will have done what they can for the conversion of sinners.

The great mass of those who attend divine worship, yet remain unimpressed, are persons by whom the truths of the gospel are "commonly considered as so true, that they lose all the power of truth, and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors." The business of the Christian minister is to inquire how these truths may be most effectually rescued from a neglect which is only aggravated by the circumstance of their universal admission; and here a wide field opens upon his view. No problem could be propounded for solution more important than one which should have for its object to ascertain, by unwearied investigation, what is the form and manner in which sacred truth should be presented and applied, so as to afford the highest possible probability of affecting the mind of the hearer; and we should think it worth while to make the tour of Europe, or even to cross the wide Atlantic, could we hope by so doing to gather more effective illustrations wherewith to set before men the things which belong to their everlasting peace.

As it is understood, by a kind of legal fiction, that theological reviewers are aged men, and bishops in the church, we may be permitted strongly to recommend the cultivation of an inquiring spirit in this direction to our younger brethren in the ministry. Every plan by which a minister may prepare his hearers, during the week, for the most profitable attendance on the services of the sanctuary; every suggestion which may aid him in impressing their minds while there; every hint regarding the mode by which he may best succeed in deepening an impression which has once been made; every contrivance by which he may check or prevent the introduction of circumstances calculated to impede impression, or to take it away when made, is worthy of his most careful examination, and should assume, in his eyes, an importance inferior to no part of that valuable preparatory study, by which he has been fitted to appear as the instructor of others.

Let it not be supposed that we attach the slightest value to any of these things, as in themselves efficacious to the conversion of souls; but, unless it is to be asserted, or implied, that because divine influences are necessary to give saving power to the preaching of the cross, it matters little whether the hearer be brought to the

house of God from his closet or from a news-room; whether truth be presented in the most attractive, or the most repulsive form; whether a sermon be drawled out or declaimed, or whether it be delivered with all the winning earnestness of deep Christian solicitude, the importance of presenting and applying truth in that form, and under those circumstances which seem best adapted to affect the heart of the hearer, must be acknowledged. Our argument would remain the same were the command to preach to grave-stones instead of men; for if God commanded grave-stones to be preached to, it would be fitting that we should do it with an energy like that which impelled the spirit of Ezekiel, when he prophesied to the dead and dry bones in the valley of vision. No mistake more fatal to usefulness can well be committed, than to suppose, on the one hand, that a conscientious regard for the best interests of men is all that is required to form a preacher; or, on the other hand, that the road to eminence lies in following the track of some popular orator. It should never be forgotten, that it is quite possible to speak from the deepest conviction, and yet be unimpressive, as it also is, to gather and to enchain a crowded auditory without affecting a single soul. We think there is much to be learned in what has been hitherto an unexplored region—the philosophy of influencing mind; and we firmly believe that the commencement of that great moral change, which, there is every reason to suppose from the predictions of scripture, is to be produced by the preaching of that cross which is foolishness to the unrenewed heart, will be preceded by new discoveries in this department of sacred science; the art of preaching will be better understood; new avenues to the conscience will be discovered, those which are already known will be more widely opened up and better improved; all the apparently trifling circumstances which deepen or carry off impressions, whether connected with the arrangements of divine worship, the social habits of Christian families, or the private deportment and conversation of ministers, will be more justly estimated; and the sword of the Spirit, instead of being, as it now oftentimes is, an unwieldy weapon in the hands of unskilful fencers, will be pointed with a more divine skill, and be pressed home with unerring precision.

No one can bestow even a cursory glance upon the American preacher, without observing that our transatlantic brethren direct their attention much more exclusively than we do to the conversion of sinners, and this circumstance alone stamps a peculiar character upon their discourses. The leading object with them seems almost invariably to awaken. With us, it is more frequently to inform. Tenderness commonly characterizes an English preacher. Severity an American one. The former lingers in hope that he shall win men by the sweetness of the gospel. The latter seeks to drive men to Christ by hurling unsparingly the thunders of the law. English sermons are mostly soothing. American ones often partake of an irritating character. Where we endeavor to affect the feelings, they take a steady aim at the conscience. Bold and direct appeal, accompanied by a close and constant personal application to the hearer, mark the one; calm, philosophical discussion and pious reflections distinguish the other. If they sometimes err in making those sad whom God has not made sad, we are not unfrequently in danger of bribing into a profession of religion those whose hearts have never been thoroughly submitted to the humble requirements of the gospel. We are not fond of antithesis, or we might carry out these observations much further. They are, doubtless, open to the objections which may always be raised against general delineations of this kind; but allowing reasonably for exceptions, we believe they will be found, on the whole, to be in accordance with truth.

It will not be difficult to trace some of the causes, which have occasioned this apparent diversity both of object and method, among those who are so closely united, not less by blood than by community of feeling, as are the American and English churches. America is a young and rising country. The tide of population has of late years been rolling westward with unparalleled rapidity. Each succeeding wave bears upon its bosom a fresh supply of restless spirits, prepared to carry forward with untiring energy the enterprises which others have commenced. One by one the tall trees of the forest bow beneath the stroke of the axe, and towns and villages rise in clusters, as if by magic in the woods. A few years more, and regions, but recently

snatched from the sovereignty of the fowl and the brute,

'Where nature sowed herself, and reaped her crops,'

are intersected by innumerable roads; the soil is cultivated; and barges laden with the products of industry and commerce float along canals, which at once serve to unite distant cities, and to invite a new race of emigrants to settle upon their banks. And thus the stream moves on, with a force altogether unexampled in the history of nations, and with a speed which the world has never before witnessed.

The American churches are not unmindful of what is going forward. The Christian sees that there is but one thing which can blight the vision of that glorious future which is ever floating before the eyes of his countrymen, and that one thing is the absence, or inefficient supply of the means of grace. There is but one famine that he dreads, and that is the famine of the word of God. Often does his eye anxiously glance over the map of that great western wilderness, which he sees peopling at a rate that outstrips calculation, and sometimes he trembles, lest it should be overrun with superstition and infidelity, those sure precursors of national ruin. He is conscious that the whole Christian world looks to America as the field on which is to be tried the most important of all experiments in spiritual husbandry, whether a vast tract of land can be duly cultivated, and all the interests of religion be triumphantly sustained, in the face of an overwhelming increase of population, and without any legislative aid. In common with his countrymen, he has long maintained the affirmative. The hour of trial is now come. He must manifest to all men that his boasting has not been in vain in the Lord. Moral influence has been his watchword, and now he must try the temper of a weapon to which he has long been accustomed to attach a power little short of omnipotence.

It is under the pressure of thoughts like these, that American churches and American ministers are moulded and fashioned. The snug and comfortable times when they lolled in lined pews, and dwelt in ceiled houses, enduring little besides the imaginary diseases of spiritual hypochondriacism, are fast passing away. Already from church to church the ominous sound is heard, "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." No sooner has the student emerged from the walls of college than he feels he must be at work. He has no time to loiter. The lighter employments of literature must be thrown aside. Popery and infidelity fraternize as readily in America as in Europe, and every day the unnatural league is more closely cementing. There is but one remedy,—the universal diffusion of the gospel—the evangelization of the people—a multiplicity of conversions—in a word, revivals of religion.

The promotion of revivals, or, as it may be expressed less technically, the conversion of sinners, is then, in most cases, the one idea which occupies the mind of a young New England clergyman. It is obvious that his preaching will be modified accordingly. His attention is naturally turned towards those men whose ministry may seem to have been most blessed to the unregenerate, and the writings of Edwards, Bellamy, Davies, and others, become, in subservience to the Bible, his text-books. He marks their theological peculiarities. He sees that they continually drew a broad and affecting line of demarcation between their converted and unconverted hearers, and he does the same. He finds that they fearlessly pressed upon men the immediate and evangelical performance of their obligations to God, as duties which belong to the creature, irrespective of any decrees of the Creator, and exhortations of this character form a prominent part of his ministrations. They dwelt much on the absolute sovereignty of God in the disposal of his blessings, and on this topic he frequently enlarges. In short, before he is aware, he is treading in their steps. It is unnecessary to particularize the sentiments of men with whose works every theologian is familiar. It is sufficient to observe, that this is the school in which the great majority of American divines have evidently been trained. They have adopted these men as their models, not less from a persuasion that their mode of presenting truth is in accordance with the revealed will of God, than because their sentiments seem to have been eminently marked out in the history of the church by his approval.

Were we obliged to fix on some one particular in which the American differs most

widely from the British preacher, we should say it was in the handling of the cross. To illustrate our meaning, we will take two faithful and evangelical ministers of the gospel, the one trained in the severe school of Edwards and Bellamy—a New England theologian; the other educated in an English dissenting college. Both of course hold that the preaching of Christ crucified is, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, the grand instrument of conversion; but they differ as to the mode in which this glorious mystery is to be presented to the sinner. The former considers it primarily an instrument of conviction, and with Peter, seeks to prick his hearers to the heart, by bringing home to them the accusation of having crucified the Lord of Glory. The latter tries to win over the sinner to God by the offer of reconciliation. The one holds that there is a peculiar adaptation in the cross of Christ, to melt the stubbornness of the unrenewed heart—that it is "a mighty principle of attraction, brought to bear upon a nature that might have remained sullen and unmoved under every other application." As if "God, who knows what is in man, seemed to have known that in his dark and guilty bosom there was but one solitary hold that he had over him; and that to reach it, he must just put on a look of graciousness, and tell us that he has no pleasure in our death, and manifest towards us the longings of a bereaved parent, and even humble himself to a suppliant in the cause of our return, and send a gospel of peace into the world, and bid his messengers to bear, throughout all its habitations, the tidings of his good-will to the children of men." This, he says, is the "manifested good-will of God to his creatures, the band of love and the cord of a man by which he draws them."* The other, agreeing in all that is said concerning the love of God, thus wondrously manifested, maintains that this demonstration of goodness, so far from "wooing man into a reciprocally warm and confiding attachment," only affords, in its universal rejection, a more complete illustration of the desperate nature of that depravity which will no more be won by love than it will be subdued by terror.

In this particular, we are inclined to think our transatlantic friends are right. At all events, it is of importance that this subject should be thoroughly discussed, for the settlement of it has much to do with our mode of presenting the gospel. If the obstacle to man's reconciliation with his Maker were some error of opinion regarding the true character of God, a clear demonstration of his wondrous love in Christ Jesus would certainly be better adapted to remove it, than the additional pressure of any weight of obligation; but arising, as it does, from the most desperate enmity of heart, both to God and goodness, this display of tenderness only falls upon an unrenewed soul like the pale and sickly beam of a wintry sun. It may enlighten the understanding, or it may lead to a speculative and inoperative faith; and we do not deny that out of this dead faith has frequently sprung up, under the quickening beams of the life-giving Spirit, a living flame never to be put out. But we firmly believe that more commonly it is greedily seized upon as an opiate to a wounded conscience, and being unaccompanied by any direct and immediate interference on the part of the Holy Spirit, working a thorough change of the affections, it proves only "a savor of death unto death."

It is allowed on all sides, that wherever the Holy Spirit enters the heart, his first work is to convince of sin. Upon this admission, our American friends argue that it is the preacher's duty to follow the line of the Spirit, and dealing with the sinner as Paul dealt with Felix, to press directly upon his conscience those topics which are most calculated to leave a very painful sense of his obligation, and to make him either cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" or oblige him to say, "Go thy way for this season." To these views we are aware that many objections have been made, and the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness has frequently been brought forward as indicative of another mode of presenting the gospel. We do not, however, see much force in this. The wounded Israelites were representative of sinners deeply convinced of sin—smarting under its bite, and conscious of their wounds; and we do not see that they at all prefigured careless slumbers. The Philippian jailer, too, is a case equally inapplicable. His distress of mind arose, not, as some would have us to believe, simply from terror at the earthquake, accompanied

* Dr. Chalmers.

by a fear that his prisoners would escape, but from the workings of that Divine Spirit, who seized upon this incident to arrest him in a moment by convictions as deep and as sudden as those which in former years had smitten his prisoner to the ground on his way to Damascus. Let a man be in this state of mind, crushed under the weight of a violated law, and there is but one sentence suited to his case, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

The first aim then of an American preacher is to produce convictions of sin. In order to do this, he is continually opening up, and pressing the obligations of the sinner, and urging him, in the most direct terms, and by every motive which scripture will sanction, to the exercise of evangelical repentance without a moment's delay. He fearlessly tells him to repent, to pray, to believe, to turn, to choose, to strive—in short, in the language of scripture, to make himself a new heart; and he tells him that if he is finally lost, it will not be for committing sins which he could not avoid, but for refusing and neglecting to do that which he could have done. He goes on, demanding for God the affections of the sinner, and pleads the right of the Creator to be loved, not merely on condition that he will love the sinner, but because his character, in all its aspects, is inexpressibly lovely, and infinitely worthy of his regard.

This style of preaching, it is evident, will materially affect the phenomena of conversion. It is by no means inconsistent with a full recognition of Divine Sovereignty to assert, that the peculiar circumstances which mark conversion, as well as many points in the future character of the converted, are commonly decided by the influence of the ministry under which the change has been accomplished. The fine gold which comes out of the crucible is all purified alike by the refiner's fire, but the outward fashion of it depends on the mould into which it falls. Thus it is in conversion. A sinner converted under a New England preacher is, in many respects, differently fashioned from one who is equally made a new creature in Christ Jesus under the ministry of a dissenting minister in England. The same observation holds true with regard to different denominations. A Churchman, a Wesleyan, an Independent, and a Scottish Presbyterian, may be all equally born again under the same gospel, and yet there will be in them certain important differences, which may be traced most clearly and decisively to the character of the ministry, and the discipline of the church under the instruction of which they have been regenerated.

With these views, we consider it by no means unimportant to inquire what style of preaching is best adapted to form strong men in Christ Jesus,—what mode of treatment will be most likely to secure a healthy spiritual progeny. As there are some who never get beyond the character of babes in Christ, so there are others who, through the ignorance or negligence of their spiritual nurses, are all their days rickety children. We trust we shall not be misunderstood. We are serious on a serious subject, and if we use familiar illustrations it is only because others do not occur equally expressive. We deeply feel that we have yet much to learn in the divine art of nourishing and bringing up the young and sickly of the flock.

In the accounts which have reached us of American revivals, nothing has excited more surprise than the depth of sorrow which the subjects of them seem to experience. Under sermons which have been *read* from the manuscript, without a single gesticulation, the hardy sons of the forest have cried out aloud in distress; and hundreds and thousands, under the pressure of emotions like these, have found all the claims of appetite forgotten, and sleep banished from a couch wet with the tears of unfeigned sorrow. But this is not all. A few days have elapsed, and perhaps at midnight, perhaps in the solitude of the woods, or it may be in the house of God, the whole scene is changed; the clouds have rolled away; the cheering beams of the Sun of Righteousness have shot into the soul, and the heart, which but yesterday was fit to break with anguish, now, unable to restrain its joy, bursts forth in singing.

It has often been asked, why emotions of this powerful kind should so rarely be found among ourselves, and various solutions of the difficulty have been offered Some have resolved the matter altogether into divine sovereignty; others have associated these powerful awakenings with certain local and national peculiarities; and others again have ascribed the apparent absence of extreme distress or lively joy in

English converts, to that habit of concealment which is induced by a refined and highly artificial state of society. We should rather look for an explanation in some of those characteristics which we have pointed out, as distinguishing the Christian ministry of the respective countries, and as a natural consequence in the different treatment which an awakened sinner would experience from his spiritual advisers. In the one case his wounded conscience would be unsparingly cauterized, in order that, if healed, it might be healed every whit. In the other, tenderness would throw aside the knife, and apply a balsam, and the wound, however mollified by sweet ointment, is consequently in continual danger of opening and bleeding afresh. In many cases we fear the readiness with which first convictions of sin have been accounted proof of a saving work of God, and been treated accordingly, has led to false and imaginary conversions. The sinner, soothed by promises which do not belong to him, has been bribed into a speculative faith, which for a time has quieted his fears and given him peace. But, after a while, conscience has again lifted up her voice, and then nothing will satisfy him but a continual opiate. Every sermon which presses obligation irritates, until at length the lap of Antinomian heresy is the only place in which he can slumber in peace. We can never be too particular in pressing the necessity of distinct convictions, leading to a loathing and habitual turning away from sin. It is generally taken for granted, that a sinner's distress arises from erroneous conceptions of the gospel. But this is not the fact. His despair is commonly occasioned, not by an opinion that Christ is unable or unwilling to save him, but from a fear, certainly well founded, that Christ will not save him without entire submission, unfeigned repentance, and a new heart. In the absence of any evidence that this great change has taken place, to comfort him with promises which belong only to the believer, is to oppose the Spirit of God.

But it is not in the treatment of the unconverted merely, that this severity of character is visible. It is equally prominent in exhortations to the believer. It gives a tone to Christian society, and most of all it distinguishes the minister himself, whether in or out of the pulpit. The firm pressed lip, the sepulchral tone, the air of deep solemnity which belong to the severe New England preacher, are as unlike the benignant smiles and fluent utterance of an English dissenter, as are the stern and lean physiognomies of our puritan forefathers, to the complacent and good-humored countenances which adorn a modern magazine.

Once again would we most earnestly urge upon our beloved young friends who are so soon to supply the vacant places of living ministers, the importance of seriously investigating all the circumstances which tend to promote or to impede ministerial efficiency. They will perhaps allow us to suggest, in a spirit, we trust, of Christian love, some things which we have long considered hinderances to the usefulness of young preachers. And first, we have observed a prevailing confusion of ideas as to what ought to be denominated means of grace; what the precise use of the word is to the unregenerate; and what exertions an unconverted man can make for his own salvation. The want of clear and distinct conceptions on these points has led to a *generalizing* mode of address; and hence, vague appeals to the sinner to believe on Christ; or, what is still more common, loose dissertations and reflections on various texts, without sufficient point or object, have taken the place of that close and heart-searching particularity which, in better days, used to pertain to the preaching of the gospel.

We know how many prejudices a young minister has to contend with; we know that in every congregation there are to be found a number of pious people who think their young pastor very deficient in his theology, if he does not embody, in almost every sermon, the leading doctrines of the gospel, and who cannot at all understand, how it should be right to distress a sinner by pointing out the uncertainty of his ever being a Christian, without at the same time enlarging on the mercy of God, and the impossibility of his doing any thing to promote his own salvation, without the influences of the Spirit. We do not, however, despair of this difficulty being overcome.

There are others, again, who have seen how husky and worthless the mode of address is to which we have adverted, and these, having recognised the principle that experimental truth is alone valuable to the mass of mankind, have confined themselves almost exclusively to supplying the spiritua.

wants, and soothing the feelings of the believer; as if God had intended that his people should be dependent for their spiritual vigor on the exhortations of their minister; as if he had not planted his church in the world for other and far more important purposes; as if he did not intend, by the agency of his people, to gather in his elect from the four corners of the earth; as if he had not himself distinctly pointed out, that his children were to seek their comfort, not from their fellow-man, but in the path of deep retirement, earnest prayer, and self-denying duty. We do not say, that the checkered experience of the believer is not a fit subject for the pulpit, but we do earnestly protest against experimental preaching being confined to the believer. Let the sinner's experience be also preached. Lay open his heart before him—hold up his dissatisfaction with the world—expose his vain strugglings with conscience—his resistings of the Spirit—his continual disappointment in the search after happiness. Distinguish his unregenerate convictions from true conversion; drive him from his innumerable hiding-places. Put before him, in all its length and breadth, the difficulty of escaping from the damnation of hell, and make him feel that it is an awfully uncertain thing, whether he will ever be a Christian. This we should call experimental preaching.

We have already said enough on the importance of adopting a colloquial style. Long and smoothly rounded periods are an abomination in the pulpit—a device of the devil to keep the good word of God out of the hearts of the multitude. It should never be forgotten that the great mass of hearers are, after all, only a well-dressed mob of uneducated persons. Few ministers are privileged to have a reflecting auditory. Let the recollection, then, of this simple truth regulate the preacher in his choice both of style and language. We would have inscribed on the wall of every study, "To the poor the gospel is preached." A minister who remembers this, will feel that he must *depict*, not *discuss*; that one illustration is worth a thousand abstract explanations; and that although it should lessen his fame, it will increase his usefulness, always to be familiar, and not unfrequently to repeat the same truth again and again.

The grand mistake which many make, is to suppose that a familiar style and plainness of speech dispense in great measure with the necessity of study. On the contrary, they demand a double portion of labor. A vicious and inflated style is that into which men are most commonly apt to fall. To be natural and simple is the highest attainment of art.

We by no means undervalue a glowing eloquence; but we cannot forget that although eloquence may sometimes adorn, it not unfrequently obscures truth, just as a painted window intercepts the prospect. If we were asked upon what book we should recommend a young preacher to form his style, we should reply, Upon the Pilgrim's Progress. We cannot refrain from quoting here, as fully expressing our sentiments, the praise which that admirable book has just extorted from reviewers who have little sympathy with its theology.

"The style of Bunyan is delightful to every reader, and invaluable as a study to every person who wishes to obtain a wide command over the English language. The vocabulary is the vocabulary of the common people. There is not an expression, if we except a few technical terms of theology, which would puzzle the rudest peasant. We have observed several pages which do not contain a single word of more than two syllables. Yet no writer has said more exactly what he meant to say. For magnificence, for pathos, for vehement exhortation, for subtle disquisition, for every purpose of the poet, the orator, and the divine, this homely dialect—the dialect of plain workingmen—is perfectly sufficient. There is no book in our literature on which we would so readily stake the fame of the old unpolluted English language—no book which shows so well how rich that language is in its own proper wealth, and how little it has been improved by all that it has borrowed."*

When we have heard a minister telling his hearers to take a *retrospect* of their past lives, we have often wondered why it should never occur to him that it would be incalculably better to bid them *look back*. It is the continual use of words which are absolutely unintelligible to the poor, that makes preaching so uninteresting to them. If it goes on, we shall soon have no poor hearers to preach to. For the most part our old Saxon words are decidedly the best;

* Edinburgh Review.

hey are simpler and more determinate in heir signification.

One word at parting to our own brethren. Before we resolve our comparative want of success in the ministry altogether into divine sovereignty, let us be quite sure that we are doing all we can for the conversion of the great mass of the unregenerate. It is not enough to preach to them occasionally or even frequently. It is not enough to beseech them, one by one, in private, even with tears, to be reconciled to God. It is not enough to gather them in classes, according to their respective circumstances, and specially to address them together in the language of entreaty and expostulation. It is not enough to pray for them and with them. All these, and a thousand other things which will suggest themselves to a mind bent upon the salvation of souls, must be done, and yet much will be left undone. After all, Satan will surpass us in activity, and we shall be found at best but unprofitable servants.

XXXI.—EARNEST APPEAL ON A FAITHFUL DISCHARGE OF THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

BY THE REV. RICHARD BAXTER.

And now, brethren, what have we to do for the time to come, but to deny our lazy flesh, and rouse up ourselves to the work before us? The harvest is great—the laborers are few—the loiterers and hinderers are many—the souls of men are precious—the misery of sinners is great, and the everlasting misery to which they are near is greater—the joys of heaven are inconceivable—the comfort of a faithful minister is not small—the joy of extensive success will be a full reward. To be fel owworkers with God and his Spirit is no little honor; to subserve the blood-shedding of Christ for men's salvation is not a light thing; to lead on the armies of Christ through the thickest of the enemy; to guide them safely through a dangerous wilderness; to steer the vessel through such storms, and rocks, and sands, and shelves, and bring it safe to the harbor of rest, requireth no small skill and diligence. The fields now seem even white unto harvest; the preparations that have been made for us are very great; the season of working is more calm than most ages before us have ever seen. We have carelessly loitered too long already; the present time is posting away; while we are trifling men are dying. Oh, how fast are they passing into another world! And is there nothing in all this to awaken us to our duty—nothing to resolve us to speedy and unwearied diligence? Can we think that a man can be too careful and painful under all these motives and engagements? or can that man be a fit instrument for other men's illumination, who is himself so blind? or for the quickening of others, who is himself so senseless? What! brethren, are ye, who are men of wisdom, as dull as the common people? and do we need to heap up a multitude of words to persuade you to a known and weighty duty? One would think it should be enough to set you on work, to show a line in the book of God to prove it to be his will; or to prove to you that the work hath a tendency to promote men's salvation. One would think that the very sight of your miserable neighbors would be motives sufficient to draw out your most compassionate endeavors for their relief. If a cripple do but unlap his sores, and show you his disabled limbs, it will move you without words; and will not the case of souls, that are near to damnation, move you? Oh, happy church, if the physicians were but healed themselves! and if we had not too much of that infidelity and stupidity against which we daily preach in others; and were more soundly persuaded of that of which we persuade others; and were more deeply affected with the wonderful things with which we would affect them. Were there but such clear and deep impressions upon our own souls of those glorious things that we daily preach, oh, what a change would it make in our sermons, and in our private course of life! Oh! what a miserable thing it is to the church and to themselves, that men must preach of heaven and hell, before they soundly believe that there are such things, or have felt the weight of the doctrines which they preach! It would amaze a sensible man to think what matters we preach and talk of; what it is for the soul to pass out of this flesh, and appear before a righteous God, and enter upon unchangeable joy or unchangeable torment! Oh, with what amazing thoughts do dying men apprehend these things! How should such matters be preached and discoursed of! Oh, the grav-

ity, the seriousness, the incessant diligence which these things require! I know not what others think of them, but for my part I am ashamed of my stupidity, and wonder at myself that I deal not with my own and others' souls, as one that looks for the great day of the Lord—and that I can have room for almost any other thoughts or words—and that such astonishing matters do not wholly absorb my mind. I marvel how I can preach of them slightly and coldly—and how I can let men alone in their sins—and that I do not go to them, and beseech them, for the Lord's sake, to repent, however they take it, and whatever pains or trouble it should cost me. I seldom come out of the pulpit but my conscience smiteth me that I have been no more serious and fervent in such a case. It accuseth me not so much for want of ornaments or elegancy, nor for letting fall an unhandsome word; but it asketh me, "How couldst thou speak of life and death with such a heart? How couldst thou preach of heaven and hell in such a careless, sleepy manner? Dost thou believe what thou sayest? Art thou in earnest or in jest? How canst thou tell people that sin is such a thing, and that so much misery is upon them and before them, and be no more affected with it? Shouldst thou not weep over such a people, and should not thy tears interrupt thy words? Shouldst thou not cry aloud, and show them their transgressions, and entreat and beseech them as for life and death?" Truly, this is the peal that conscience doth ring in my ears, and yet my drowsy soul will not be awakened. Oh, what a thing is a senseless, hardened heart! O Lord, save us from the plague of infidelity and hard-heartedness ourselves, or else how shall we be fit instruments of saving others from it? Oh, do that on our own souls which thou wouldst use us to do on the souls of others! I am even confounded to think what a difference there is between my sick-bed apprehensions, and my pulpit apprehensions, of the life to come; that ever that can seem so light a matter to me now, which seemed so great and astonishing a matter then, and I know will do so again when death looks me in the face, when yet I daily know and think of that approaching hour; and yet those forethoughts will not recover such working apprehensions. Oh, brethren, surely if you had all conversed with neighbor death as oft as I have done, and as often received the sentence in yourselves, you would have an unquiet conscience, if not a reformed life, as to your ministerial diligence and fidelity; and you would have something within you that would frequently ask you such questions as these: "Is this all thy compassion for lost sinners? Wilt thou do no more to seek and to save them? Is there not such, and such, and such a one—Oh! how many round about thee, that are yet the visible sons of death? What hast thou said to them, or done for their conversion? Shall they die, and be in hell, before thou wilt speak to them one serious word to prevent it? Shall they there curse thee forever that didst no more in time to save them?" Such cries of conscience are daily ringing in mine ears, though, the Lord knows, I have too little obeyed them. The God of mercy pardon me, and awaken me, with the rest of his servants that have been thus sinfully negligent. I confess to my shame, that I seldom hear the bell toll for one that is dead, but conscience asketh me, "What hast thou done for the saving of that soul before it left the body? There is one more gone to judgment; what didst thou to prepare him for judgment?" and yet I have been slothful and backward to help them that survive. How can you choose, when you are laying a corpse in the grave, but think with yourselves, "Here lieth the body, but where is the soul? and what have I done for it before it departed? It was part of my charge, what account can I give of it?" Oh, brethren, is it a small matter to you to answer such questions as these? It may seem so now, but the hour is coming when it will not seem so. If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and will condemn us much more, even with another kind of condemnation than conscience doth. The voice of conscience is a still voice, and the sentence of conscience is a gentle sentence, in comparison of the voice and the sentence of God. Alas! conscience seeth but a very little of our sin and misery, in comparison of what God seeth. What mountains would these things appear to your souls, which now seem molehills? What beams would these be in your eyes, that now seem motes, if you did but see them with a clearer light? (I dare not say, as God seeth them.) We can easily make shift to plead the cause with conscience, and either bribe it

or bear its sentence; but God is not so easily dealt with, nor his sentence so easily borne. "Wherefore we receiving," and preaching, "a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." But because you shall not say that I affright you with bugbears, and tell you of dangers and terrors when there are none, I will here show you the certainty and sureness of that condemnation that is like to befall negligent pastors, particularly how many will be ready to rise up against us and condemn us, if we shall hereafter be wilful neglecters of this great work.

1. Our parents, that destined us to the ministry, will condemn us, and say, "Lord, we devoted them to thy service, and they made light of it, and served themselves."

2. Our masters that taught us, our tutors that instructed us, the schools and universities where we lived, and all the years that we spent in study, will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us; for why was all this, but for the work of God?

3. Our learning and knowledge, and ministerial gifts will condemn us; for to what end were we made partakers of these, but for the work of God?

4. Our voluntary undertaking the charge of souls will condemn us; for all men should be faithful to the trust which they have undertaken.

5. All the care of God for his church, and all that Christ hath done and suffered for it, will rise up in judgment against us, if we be negligent and unfaithful, and condemn us, because by our neglect we destroyed them for whom Christ died.

6. All the precepts and charges of Holy Scripture—all the promises of assistance and reward—all the threatenings of punishment, will rise up against us and condemn us; for God did not speak all this in vain.

7. All the examples of the prophets and apostles, and other preachers recorded in scripture, and all the examples of the faithful and diligent servants of Christ in these later times, and in the places around us, will rise up in judgment and condemn us; for all these were for our imitation, and to provoke us to a holy emulation in fidelity and ministerial diligence.

8. The Holy Bible that lies open before us, and all the books in our studies, that tell us of our duty directly or indirectly, will condemn the lazy and unprofitable servant; for we have not all these helps and furniture in vain.

9. All the sermons that we preach, to persuade our people to work out our salvation with fear and trembling—to lay violent hands upon the crown of life, and take the kingdom by force—to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and so to run as to obtain, will rise up against the unfaithful and condemn them; for if it so nearly concern them to labor for their salvation, doth it not concern us who have the charge of them to be also violent, laborious, and unwearied in striving to help on their salvation? Is it worth their labor and patience, and is it not also worth ours?

10. All the sermons that we preach to them, to set forth the evil of sin, the danger of a natural state, the need of a Saviour, the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, yea, and the truth of the Christian religion, will rise up in judgment against the unfaithful and condemn them. And a sad review it will be to themselves, when they shall be forced to think, "Did I tell them of such great dangers and hopes in public, and would I do no more in private to help them? What! tell them daily of damnation, and yet let them run into it so easily! Tell them of such a glory, and scarcely speak a word to them personally to help them to it! Were these such great matters with me at church, and so small matters when I came home!" Ah! this will be dreadful self-condemnation!

11. All the sermons that we have preached to persuade other men to such duties—as neighbors to exhort one another daily, and parents and masters to teach their children and servants the way to heaven—will rise up in judgment against the unfaithful and condemn them; for will you persuade others to that which you will not do as far as you can yourselves? When you threaten them for neglecting their duty, how much more do you threaten your own souls?

12. All the maintenance which we take for our service, if we be unfaithful, will condemn us; for who is it that will pay a servant to take his pleasure, or sit idle, or work for himself? If we have the fleece, surely it is that we may look after the flock; and, by taking the wages, we oblige ourselves to the work.

13. All the witness that we have borne

against the scandalous, negligent ministers of this age, and all the endeavors that we have used for their removal, will condemn the unfaithful; for God is no respecter of persons. If we succeed them in their sins, we have spoken all that against ourselves; and, as we condemned them, God and others will condemn us if we imitate them; and, though we should not be so bad as they, it will prove sad if we are even like them.

14. All the judgments that God hath in this age executed on negligent ministers, before our eyes, will condemn us if we be unfaithful. Hath he made the idle shepherds and sensual drones to stink in the nostrils of the people? and will he honor us if we be idle and sensual? Hath he sequestrated them, and cast them out of their habitations, and out of their pulpits, and laid them by as dead while they are yet alive, and made them a hissing and a by-word in the land? and yet dare we imitate them? Are not their sufferings our warnings? and did not all this befall them as an example to us? If any thing in the world would awaken ministers to self-denial and diligence, methinks we had seen enough to do it. Would you have imitated the old world, if you had seen the flood that drowned it? Would you have indulged in the sins of Sodom—idleness, pride, fulness of bread—if you had stood by, and seen the flames which consumed it ascending up to heaven? Who would have been a Judas, that had seen him hanged and burst asunder? And who would have been a lying, sacrilegious hypocrite, that had seen Ananias and Sapphira die? And who would not have been afraid to contradict the gospel, that had seen Elymas smitten with blindness? And shall we prove idle, self-seeking ministers, when we have seen God scourging such out of his temple, and sweeping them away as dirt into the channels? God forbid! for then how great and how manifold will our condemnation be!

Lastly, all the days of fasting and prayer, which have of late years been kept in England for a reformation, will rise up in judgment against the unreformed, who will not be persuaded to the painful part of the work. This, I confess, is so heavy an aggravation of our sin, that it makes me ready to tremble to think of it. Was there ever a nation on the face of the earth which so long and so solemnly followed God with fasting and prayer as we have done? Before the parliament began, how frequen and fervent were we in secret! After that for many years together, we had a monthly fast commanded by the parliament, besides frequent private and public fasts on other occasions. And what was all this for? Whatever was for some time the means we looked at, yet still the end of all our prayers was church-reformation, and therein especially these two things—a faithful ministry, and the exercise of discipline in the church. And did it once enter, then, into the hearts of the people, or even into our own hearts to imagine, that when we had all we would have, and the matter was put into our own hands to be as painful as we could, and to exercise what discipline we would, that then we would do nothing but publicly preach? that we would not be at the pains of catechizing and instructing our people personally, nor exercise any considerable part of discipline at all? It astonishes me to think of it! What a depth of deceit is the heart of man! What! are good men's hearts so deceitful? Are all men's hearts so deceitful? I confess, I then told many soldiers, and other sensual men, that though they had fought for a reformation, I was confident they would abhor it, and be enemies to it, when they saw and felt it—thinking that the yoke of discipline would have pinched their necks, and that when they were catechized and personally dealt with, and reproved for their sin in private and public, and brought to public confession and repentance, or avoided as impenitent, they would scorn and spurn at all this, and take the yoke of Christ for tyranny; but little did I think that the ministers would let all fall, and put almost none of this upon them, but let them alone for fear of displeasing them, and let all run on as it did before.

Oh, the earnest prayers which I have heard for a painful ministry, and for discipline! It was as if they had even wrestled for salvation itself. Yea, they commonly called discipline, "The kingdom of Christ, or the exercise of his kingly office in his church;" and so preached and prayed for it, as if the setting up of discipline had been the setting up of the kingdom of Christ. And did I then think that they would refuse to set it up when they might? What! is the kingdom of Christ now reckoned among things indifferent?

If the God of heaven, who knew our hearts, had, in the midst of our prayers and cries, on one of our public monthly fasts, returned us this answer with his dreadful voice in the audience of the assembly: "You deceitful-hearted sinners! What hypocrisy is this, to weary me with your cries for that which you will not have if I would give it you, and thus to lift up your voices for that which your souls abhor! What is reformation, but the instructing and importunate persuading of sinners to entertain my Christ and grace, as offered to them, and the governing of my church according to my word? Yet these, which are your work, you will not be persuaded to when you come to find it troublesome and ungrateful. When I have delivered you, it is not me but yourselves that you will serve; and I must be as earnest to persuade you to reform the church in doing your own duty, as you are earnest with me to grant you liberty for reformation; and when all is done, you will leave it undone, and will be long before you will be persuaded to my work." If the Lord, or any messenger of his, had given us such an answer, would it not have amazed us? Would it not have seemed incredible to us, that our hearts should be such as now they prove? and would we not have said, as Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" or as Peter, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I." Well, brethren, sad experience has showed us our frailty. We have refused the troublesome and costly part of the reformation that we prayed for; but Christ yet turneth back, and looketh with a merciful eye upon us. Oh! that we had yet the hearts immediately to go out and weep bitterly, and to do no more as we have done, lest a worse thing come upon us, and now to follow Christ, whom we have so far forsaken, through labor and suffering, even though it were to death!

ESSAYS

ON

REVIVALS, PASTORAL DUTIES, ETC.

I.—ON REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

BY THE REV. J. A. JAMES, OF BIRMINGHAM.

1. *What is the real state of religion in these kingdoms? and is the condition of our churches such as to justify and demand any special efforts to obtain a revival?* In replying to this question, I would by no means assert or insinuate, that vital godliness is at a lower ebb at the present time than at any former period since the Reformation. Without doubt, the most lukewarm age of our Protestant history was that which terminated when Wesley and Whitfield commenced their glorious labors. An impulse was then given, the force of which is not yet spent, and in all probability never will be, till the millennium. Religion has been gradually reviving ever since. The vast and delightful increase of truly pious clergymen in the established church; the astonishing expansion of the Wesleyan body, the progressive advance of the different denominations of evangelical Dissenters; the spirit of holy and benevolent activity, as manifested by the formation of so many religious institutions for the spread of the gospel in the world, are certainly cheering and unequivocal symptoms of a quickening influence; but this may be admitted with

out disproving the necessity of a still greater awakening. Revival is a comparative term. That may be a high state of vitality, as compared with a previous state of absolute death, which, however, is the languor of disease itself, when contrasted with what is enjoyed by another body in possession of a high degree of health. Comparing the state of religion in this country with what it was, it is flourishing; compared with what it should be, considering our means and privileges, or with what it is on the other side of the Atlantic, it is low indeed. Mr. Colton thus defines a revival:—"It is the multiplied power of religion over a community of minds, when the Spirit of God awakens Christians to special faith and effort, and brings sinners to repentance." In other words, it means an unusual and visible display of divine grace in converting the impenitent, and raising the piety of believers to a higher elevation; an extraordinary work of God, in making the wicked righteous, and the righteous more righteous. Examine now the state of our churches, with reference to each of these two parts of a revival. You are well acquainted with the religious condition of your different societies; of the labors of your own pastors you are the constant witnesses, and cannot be ignorant of the results. And now let me ask you, what are those results? Are you the delighted spectators of congregations bowed under the power of the truth? Do you perceive a deep and general impression produced by the preaching of the word? Do you know of great numbers pricked to the heart, and crying out, in the agony of a wounded spirit, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Do you see ten, twenty, fifty, coming forward at one time, and from time to time, to join the fellowship of the faithful? Perhaps you feel surprise at such a question; but why should you? Such things are of common occurrence in America, and have occurred in this land. Are not many of you painfully conscious of a state of religion so low, that sometimes months, and even years pass by, without a single addition being made to the church? Do you not know that it is a very common case for the pastor and the people to lament together, under what seems to them to be an almost total suspension of converting grace? The accession of two or three to the number of communicants is regarded as a kind of wonder, compelling many a grateful and astonished witness to exclaim, "What has God wrought!" I may be in error, but it is my opinion, that, compared with the prodigious amount of instrumentality employed in this age, the quantity of spiritual effect was never so small. Means must now be counted on no lower a scale than that of millions; the gospel sermons preached, the Bibles circulated, the tracts distributed, the lessons taught, must all be reckoned by millions. Does the work of conversion then, I ask, keep pace with such means employed to effect it? Upon a moderate computation, fifteen or twenty thousand men, of truly pious minds and evangelical sentiments, are every Sabbath-day publishing the glad tidings of salvation in the United Kingdom, seconded by myriads of devoted Sunday-school teachers, and thousands of holy men and women, who visit the cottages of the poor with religious tracts, and for the purpose of religious conversation—now then, I ask again, do you see a result proportioned to the means? Was not the preaching of the gospel far more effective when it was more rare? Witness the power which attended the sermons of Beveridge, and Romaine, and Grimshaw, within the pale of the establishment, and those of Wesley and Whitfield without it. What numbers were then converted, even hundreds under a single sermon! What multitudes flocked to the Saviour, at only a single invitation from the messenger of mercy! But where is any thing which even remotely approaches to such a state of things now? Attendance upon evangelical preaching, I am aware, is become fashionable, but with what spiritual effect? Out of the number who admire the preacher, and approve the sermon, how few believe unto salvation, or even correctly understand the doctrine! They hear the joyful sound, but do they know it? They are at ease in Zion, when they should fear, lest a promise being made to them of entering into rest, they should perish through unbelief.

Take the other view of a revival—I mean an increase of piety in the souls of believers—and ask, if you need no improvement here? I am aware of the spirit of zeal which is in active operation; but to consider this alone as a proof of a high state of religious feeling would be extreme

ly fallacious; for, not to say how small a portion of what is done is accomplished by the professing people of God, I may inquire how much of what they do is done from such motives as will stand the test of the scrutinizing eye of Omniscience? There is a fascination in the working of our public institutions, which throws its spell over innumerable minds, that have never yielded to the power of that very truth they are anxious to diffuse. There is in others a regard to reputation, and a submission to the compulsion of example, which will not allow them to stand back from the great moral enterprise. To ascertain the state of our religion, then, we must apply other tests than the attendance at public meetings, the amount of money-contributions to the institutions of the day, or the measure of personal services rendered to the cause of religious benevolence. These may be, and doubtless are, in many cases, the mere gratification of taste; a commutation with the conscience, in lieu of still severer and more self-denying services; or a cloud of incense to our own vanity. I would ask, what there is among you of the life of faith; of the spiritual and heavenly mind; of the victory over the world, and deadness to it; of devotional habits; of Bible meditation; of the practice of self-denial; of Christian charity; of the martyr's spirit, which never, even in minor matters, allows Christian principle to bend to expediency; of the meekness and gentleness of Christ; of the stamp of immortality, the anticipations of eternity, and the patient waiting for the coming of our Saviour; all of which are enjoined in the word of God, are implied in our profession of Christianity, and have been exemplified in men of like passions with ourselves? Do we not see almost everywhere, instead of these things, a superficial, and secular, and temporizing kind of piety; a religion without any depth of feeling, or any power of principle, or any distinctness of character; a cold, spiritless orthodoxy, united with a heartless morality; a mere exemption from gross vice and fashionable amusements; an observance of forms and decencies, but a lamentable destitution of love, of Christian temper, and tenderness of conscience? Do I defame what is called the religious world, in thus representing its present condition? Enter the social parties of professing Christians; listen to their conversation, witness their entertainments, observe their spirit; how frivolous, how worldly, how different from what might be expected from redeemed sinners, from the heirs of immortality, from the expectants of everlasting glory! Follow them home to their domestic circle, and behold their pervading temper, how irascible, how worldly, how destitute of spirituality; witness the cold and lifeless formality, the late, hurried, irregular, and undevout seasons of their family devotions, together with the shameful neglect of the religious instruction of their children and servants! Witness the shortness and inconstancy of their times for private prayer, and think how little communion with God, how little study of the scriptures, how little self-improvement can be carried on during such fragments of time, snatched from the greedy and all-devouring passion of earthly-mindedness! The spirit of prayer is expiring amidst the ashes of its own dead forms, and the Bible reduced, in many houses of professing Christians, to the degradation of a mere article of chamber-furniture, placed there for show, but not for use. Who will deny that this is but too correct a representation of modern piety? or, admitting it, deny the need in which our churches stand of a revival?

II. *I shall now remind you of the concern which you as Christians have, or ought to have, in the subject of revivals, and the obligations that lie upon you to do all in your power to promote them.* That the greatest weight of responsibility lies upon the ministers of religion, I am willing to allow; but I contend that it is not exclusively ours. Even an apostle, when writing to a body of disciples, said, "Ye also helping together, by prayer for us." As to that part of a revival which relates to the quickening of lukewarm professors, there cannot exist for a moment any doubt upon the necessity of your exerting yourselves to produce this happy change. If the church is to be revived, it must be done by interesting the church itself. It is the recruiting of your own piety, brethren, that I am now speaking of, and is this no concern of yours? You are the very persons who are to receive the inestimable blessings of the Holy Spirit, and which you, therefore, must be individually engaged to seek. Put not the subject away from yourselves, but take it home to your own bosom, for it belongs to

you. Indifference on this topic is indifference to your own spiritual and eternal welfare. If the whole body is to be renovated, it must be accomplished by a movement in each particular part. Then, as to that view of the subject which relates to the conversion of sinners, by what show of argument can you attempt to prove that this is no concern of yours? In what book or chapter of the word of God, can you find a sentiment that discharges you from all interest in this matter? Even if you were excluded from all direct instrumentality in seeking this object; if it were not permitted you to attain to the high honor of "converting a sinner from the error of his ways, saving a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins," still you are not released from obligation to pray for their success to whom this solemn business is intrusted. The conversion of sinners ought to be, and is, the matter of deepest interest to the unfallen inhabitants of the most distant world that God has created; they look, from their remote abodes, with the most intense solicitude to our planet, as the scene of redeeming mercy and saving grace. Is the salvation of sinners, then, nothing to you who dwell among the saved race, who are some of them, and who are actually invited to assist in the work of saving them? Oh! it is a grave and serious error, a practical heresy, of most fatal influence to the souls of men, that ministers only are under solemn obligations to seek the conversion of souls, and to labor for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom! It is strangely and most criminally forgotten, that the church —not merely its ministers—is put in trust with the gospel for the benefit of the world. The spirit of Christianity is essentially a spirit of propagation; and every thing in the constitution of the church implies a principle of expansion. A church is in fact a Foreign and a Home Missionary Society in itself, and every member of a church is, in one sense, a missionary. That man who does not seek the conversion of others, forgets one great purpose of his own, and suggests a serious doubt whether indeed he be converted at all. You released from all obligation to seek a revival of religion! you may as rationally think of your being released from an obligation to love God, honor Christ, and love your neighbor! The wish to be thought so, the remotest idea of it, virtually dissolves your connection with the church, and cuts the tie that binds you as a professor to the body of Christ. No; you must not, you dare not, delegate to us ministers, the duty and the honor of seeking a revival of religion. On the contrary, did you see us anxious to discharge you from all concern in the great work, you ought to resist the effort as an aggression upon your privileges, an usurpation of your rights. Come then, beloved brethren, to the help of the Lord against the mighty; co-operate with us in this transcendently important object; connect yourselves more closely with the kingdom of Christ; and give your hearts and your energies more entirely to the revival and extension of religion. Roll away the reproach, that "all men seek their own things, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." What are the politics of this world to you? what the interests of literature or science to you? what the course of discovery to you? what the state of commerce to you? what the current of events, the tide of history to you? or what even those fortunes you are endeavoring to seek for yourselves or your children to you, compared with the immortal interests involved in a genuine revival of religion?

III. An important part of the subject now remains to be considered—*The means to be employed by Christians for bringing about a Revival.* It is essentially necessary, that all the members of our churches should take a deep and individual, as well as collective interest in this subject. It belongs to you all. There is not a single member, whether rich or poor, young or old, male or female, that should feel no concern, and take no step, to obtain this blessed quickening. Each one should take it up as his own business, and feel and act as if it depended upon himself whether religion should flourish or languish. He should scarcely ask to whom, next to himself, this matter belonged, but consider himself as that one individual with whom it rested, whether the church were to diminish or increase; to whom all its interests were intrusted; and who should therefore cherish such a solicitude as he would scarcely fail to be the subject of, if he knew that all the instrumentality on which its resuscitation and the conversion of a world centred in himself. No one is to wait for others, but every one is to endeavor to influence others. No one is to ask where will the movement

begin, but every one is to originate it in himself, if he finds it not already originated by others. The glory of God, the honor of Christ, the salvation of souls, are everybody's business; and all these are comprehended in a revival of religion.

You must ardently long for it. You must not only feel that it is your business, but that it is a transcendently important and infinitely desirable event; an event which should kindle such an ardor of hope, that the soul, by the velocity and intensity of its own desires, would be kindled into a flame of hallowed and rational enthusiasm. The revival of religion is a phrase that occupies but a small space on paper, or a short time in utterance; but its results are infinite and eternal. The improvement of your own personal religion, which is, in fact, your own advance in an education for heaven and eternity—the probable salvation of your children—the increase of your own church with all the increase of God—the benefit of your cities, towns, and villages, by large accessions to the number of their pious inhabitants—the strengthening and adorning of your country, by the multiplication of those who are its ornaments and its defence—the more liberal and extended support of all those noble institutions that are "the seeds of the millennium"—the raising up of a greater number of devoted ministers and missionaries—the more rapid extension of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world—the wider diffusion of piety on earth, and the greater accumulation of joy in heaven, are the results of every revival in religion. Beautiful is the language employed in a report already of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States:—"Who can estimate the precious influence of these renovated churches upon the population of our country—upon present and future generations? What energy of moral power is thus imparted to the cause of truth! How many fountains of salvation are thus opened, to gladden the dry and thirsty land! The fruits of this astonishing work of grace are valuable to the church and to the world, beyond all human computation. In numerous communities, the predominating influence is now consecrated to the cause of God. How many mothers have been prepared, by grace, to train up their children for the kingdom of heaven! and what a noble army of young men has renounced the honors of the world, and devoted themselves to the cause of the Redeemer! Never, until the destinies of eternity are unfolded, can be known the full amount of blessings bestowed by these dispensations of mercy." Believers in Jesus Christ, professors of the faith of the gospel, can you look on such a moral picture, and feel no risings and workings of strong desire? What mean, and insignificant, and uninteresting ideas, notwithstanding their power to inflame the imaginations of the children of this world, are the revival of trade, the revival of letters, the revival of science, compared with the revival of religion! The warmest heart that ever glowed under the intensity of this burning thought is cold, and the most fervid imagination that ever brightened into rapture under the illumination of this radiant vision is dull and dark, compared with what they might be. But oh, it is melancholy to witness the indifference of the great bulk of nominal professors to this vast and momentous subject! Could we behold a tenth part of the anxiety about it that is felt and expressed in reference to a revival of trade, we should feel that vitality was becoming to circulate through the spiritual body, and that symptoms of returning animation were beginning to appear. But, alas! with many there is scarcely a perceptible pulsation of desire. They have hardly life enough left to be sensible of the palsy that has smitten the frame. "What languor has fallen upon the church of God! and yet here the impulse must begin which is to subdue the world. We need a succession of impulses; we need new baptisms of fire and of the Holy Ghost. Oh, that we felt our responsibility to the world! Our coldness and deadness end not with ourselves. We propagate coldness and death; we putrify the moral atmosphere of the world." Let us shake off our apathy; let us long for a revival, and covet, with intense solicitude, a resuscitation of religion. I do not expect to see here an exact counterpart of the scenes exhibited in America; I do not approve of all the means that are there employed to produce them; but there is one thing that all must approve, and that is, the ardent desire that prevails there for this gracious renovation. The church is beginning there to take God at his word, and to enlarge her expectations and desires to the measure of his promises. She has heard the voice of

Him who saith, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," and has responded, "Open ye the doors, that the King of glory may come in." And he is standing and knocking at the doors of our churches also, with all his fulness of grace, and all his treasures of wisdom, willing to come in and sup with us, if we will but invite him, but ready to depart if we desire not his gracious presence.

We must exercise faith in the reality and attainableness of the blessing. Mr. Colton has told us, in his interesting volume, "that, if we would have a revival, we must have a faith in the specific thing, not a vague, general notion of we know not what. Here is the starting point; this is the means of all other means, standing in the relation of parent to the rest." We treat the subject of revivals as sinners too generally do the gospel, as something to be believed in some way, but they know not how, and by somebody else, but not by themselves. We have no intelligent, appropriating faith; we hear, and read of them, but as a matter not relating to us; but why not? Is there a subject on which God has been more lavish of his promises, than the communications of his grace to them that seek his Holy Spirit? We cannot have the blessing, if we do not believe both its reality and its attainableness. Our unbelief will be fatal to our hopes; indeed, we cannot hope at all if we do not believe. This infidelity on the subject, or even a skepticism, will be as the stone upon the well's mouth, which must be rolled away before the fertilizing waters can be drawn forth. Faith, if we had it, would soon bring the blessing, for it would soon put us upon all the other means to obtain it.

We must fervently pray for a revival. General, believing, fervent, persevering prayer, would as certainly bring to us this gracious visitation, as it has done to our brethren on the other side of the Atlantic, and as it has done in every age and every country in which it has been tried. This is not now a new experiment, and ought never to have been considered as such. It is not a thing of uncertainty, whether God will bestow his Spirit upon an individual that asks it in faith and prayer—and what is a church but a collection of individuals? That which is true and certain to the one, cannot be false or contingent in reference to the many; but the prayer that is effectual, must be fervent and persevering. This is one striking characteristic of the American churches: they believe that the blessing may be obtained by supplication; and, therefore, they set apart days for humiliation and prayer, and continue with one accord in supplication to God. It has been thought by some that there is rather too much of man's contrivance in their means and plans; but is not their ultimate dependence upon God? One fact alone will teach us the importance they attach to prayer. The late excellent Mr. Bruen, in writing to a friend, after giving an account of a revival which had occurred in a town he visited, makes the following remarks:—"The most interesting proof given me of the novel state of the church at such a time is, that the minister told me the people seemed to feel that they had but to pray; that preaching was important, but inferior to prayer; and that, if it had been announced that Dr. Chalmers was to preach in the church on a week-day afternoon, and that there was to be a prayer-meeting in the court-house at the same time, and that it was equally right for the people to go to either place, they would have gone to the place of prayer in preference. God is ready to work anywhere, when his people are ready for the reception of his Holy Spirit; and, if truly prepared, we need but to ask to receive. True prayer is always successful." What can be more striking or impressive than this fact? This is the very spirit of prayer. But ah! how little of it have we in this country! How low is the flame of devotion sunk upon the altar of our hearts! Faith is so weak, and the spirit of supplication so feeble, that the church has ceased to be able to wrestle with God, and to prevail. The necessity of divine influence for the conversion of the soul, has been of late not unfrequently made the subject of resolution and speeches on the platform at public meetings; much has been said, and eloquently said, to recommend the theme to the devout attention of the Christian church; but there the matter has ended. The breath of eloquence has not fanned the languid flame of piety; and, indeed, as it is usually employed, it has but little adaptation to accomplish this end. It is not eloquence we want, but faith, and the supplicating heart. Eloquence may move man, but prayer moves the arm of God; eloquence may procure money, but prayer will bring

down the grace that money cannot purchase, and without which the greatest hoards of wealth are useless; eloquence may fill the place with the inspirations of human genius, but prayer will fill the church with the presence and the power of the great Jehovah. The believing, fervent breathings of one soul, uttering its longings after revival in the retirement of the closet, do more for the attainment of this object than a thousand orations delivered in public, amidst the plaudits of admiring auditors. Oh, Christians, let your closets testify, let your conscience testify, how much time you set apart to importune the God of all grace to pour out his Spirit upon the church and the world! The blessing is ready, but waits to be fetched from heaven by your believing prayers. When the minds of believers shall be intent upon the object, and giving utterance to their desires in vehement entreaty, they shall exclaim, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" his voice shall soon be heard in gracious response, saying, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me."

But you are not only to ask, however fervently, or knock, however importunately, at the door of mercy for the blessing; but you are to seek for it in the diligent use of other means. As very much depends upon ministerial fidelity and devotedness, you should abound in prayer for your pastors. If apostles felt their need of the prayers of the brethren, and, in the language of affectionate entreaty, said, "Pray for us," how can it be expected that the ordinary ministers of the gospel can do without the intercessions of their people? Oh! what force and beauty are there in St. Paul's words to the Corinthians, already quoted:—"You also helping together by prayer for us." Apostles, even with miraculous endowments, felt themselves feeble and powerless without the supplications of their own converts; and the humblest ministers of the word may be made mighty, and gloriously successful, by such aid. The church has never yet tried the solemn and sublime experiment, to what a lofty height of person, devotedness and success it could raise its ministers, by the power of general and fervent prayer. Christians are almost ever in the extremes of idolizing or despising their ministers; of overvaluing great talents, or undervaluing such as, though solid, are not brilliant; and thus are in danger of not praying for the former, as above the need, nor for the latter, as below the reach of divine power. Should you have a minister whose heart is not yet interested in the subject of revivals, what method can you adopt more likely to engage his attention, than to commend him to God by earnest, affectionate supplication? Expostulation with him may, perhaps, only offend him; but prayer for him cannot produce such an effect, and may bring the reviving influence from God upon his soul.

It is of no less consequence, that you should do every thing to encourage the hearts of your ministers. In order to the bringing about of a revival, there must be the most harmonious feeling, the best understanding, and the most cordial good-will between the pastor and his flock. Where the minister does not live in the affections of his people, or is dispirited by a want of proper attention to his ministry, or of due regard to his comfort, all hope of a renovated state of things in the church is utterly vain. It is in the calm of peace, and not in the storm of contention—in the summer-season of affection, and not in the wintry frost of indifference or ill-will, that a revival can be expected. It requires so much mutual confidence, deliberation, and co-operation, that the most undisturbed cordiality is essential to its existence. If you would wish your ministers to promote this great work, you must take care to keep them in a state of mind that leaves them at leisure to carry it forward. You must constantly attend their ministry, and not dishearten or paralyze their zeal, by the sight of pews vacated by those who have left their own teacher for some pulpit novelty in another place. Curiosity is a passion which should have little scope for operation in religion, whether it relate to doctrines or to preachers. Has the stranger studied for you, prayed for you, as your own minister does continually? And let your attendance be as serious as it is constant. Take earnest heed to the things you hear, lest at any time you let them slip. A revival of religion always, or at least usually, begins by a renewed solemnity in the congregation. People listen to sermons as voices from eternity, speaking to them of eternity. There are no sleepers, no idle gazers, in such assemblies; all turn to the pulpit, as to a door opening into the unseen world, through which are partially visible the

realities of heaven and hell—objects too awfully momentous to allow a spirit of trifling. You must, if you would have a revival, change your whole design and manner in hearing the word. Instead of that careless and thoughtless rush into the sanctuary, you must go from praying to hearing, and return from hearing to praying. It is shocking to think how some professors of religion treat both the preacher and his sermon. They go to the house of God as others go to a play, for entertainment, not for improvement; and return, not to apply the discourse, but to criticize it. In the hearing of servants, children, or guests, they assail it with the shafts of ridicule, or the bolts of anger; and thus messages from the eternal God to immortal souls, on the high themes of salvation and damnation, are treated with the same jocularity and merriment as are bestowed on the veriest trifles that float on the breeze of popular gossip. All this arises from, or is connected with, the idolatrous regard which is paid in the present age to eloquence. The public meetings, which are so common, and which have been thought so necessary for the support of our religious institutions—whatever benefit they may have conferred upon preachers, by cultivating a more free and popular mode of address—have corrupted in some measure the taste of the people, by producing a desire after oratorical, declamatory, and elaborate harangues, instead of the more sober, solemn, and instructive method of expounding and applying the truths of revelation; while both preachers and hearers seem to be too much occupied by matters of taste and imagination, to the neglect of the more awful functions of the conscience. It is man that too many go to hear speak, and not God; it is eloquence that they want, and not the gospel; and to be entertained, but not to be sanctified, the object they seek. True it is, that it must be sound doctrine that they hear, and orthodox preachers that they follow; but it is not for the truth's sake that dwelleth in them, but for the musical voice, the fine imagination, the master-mind, or the captivating style with which the truth is announced. This must be altered; and if we would have a revival, we must come back to the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus.

It is not irrelevant to the subject to state the necessity of maintaining a proper discipline in our churches. The church is the temple of God, a habitation for the Spirit; and if it be defiled by the addition or retention of unholy members, the Divine Inhabitant will retire, and leave it to the finger of desolation to write upon its forsaken walls, "The glory is departed." It might have been as rationally expected, that the symbol of the divine presence would have continued to rest upon the mercy-seat, had all the impurities concomitant upon the sacrificial rites been profanely swept into the Holy of Holies, as it is to believe that a revival of religion will take place in those churches where there is a gross neglect of the scriptural qualifications of the members.

If you would enjoy a revival of religion, you must take care not to be too much engrossed by secular politics. True it is, you did not cease to be citizens when you became Christians; nor did you, when you joined yourself to the church, take the veil, like a nun when she enters the convent, and sever every tie that binds you to earth, and to earthly affairs. The church is in the world, though not of it, and is to be to you a sacred retreat—a place of refreshment and repose, where you may recruit your strength, not only to struggle for the crown of glory, but with the rough cares of time, and from whence you must come forth with invigorated piety, to guide and to influence the current of human affairs. But still it must not be concealed, brethren, that these are times in which the danger lies, not in the extreme of being too little, but of being too much involved in political pursuits. The government of the earth must not be abandoned by the saints; but, oh! let the saints maintain the character and rights of their earthly citizenship, remembering that they belong to another and a holy community, and having their conversation in heaven. You must be sometimes in the dangerous region of party politics; but remember it is to piety an infected place, a region of malaria, in which you must guard as much as possible your spiritual health, and from which you must escape as speedily as you can.

There is another circumstance intimately connected with the hopes of a revival of religion—I mean a spirit of Christian charity towards your fellow Christians of other denominations. Evil omens have shown themselves of late of a growing

spirit of alienation between the evangelical part of the church of England and the orthodox Dissenters. What may be the cause I will not venture to inquire, but merely state the fact, that instead of approximating nearer and nearer to each other, as by the identity of their "like precious faith," and common salvation, it might be expected they would do, they are continually receding to a greater distance. Alas! alas! that in the attractions of the cross—the common centre of their religious opinions and their holy sensibilities—there should be less power to unite and harmonize, than there is in their varying forms of ecclesiastical polity to produce repulsion and dissonance. Roots of bitterness have sprung up of late with portentous rapidity, which, instead of being eradicated by the hand of a cautious zeal, have been fostered by prejudice, till they have grown to such a height as to chill with their shadow, and to poison with their influence, the fairest flower in the garden of the Lord—the spirit of Christian charity. We can expect no revival while these things last, except it be a revival of bigotry and intolerance. "The irascible passions," says Mr. Hall, "surround the soul with a turbulent atmosphere, than which nothing is more opposed to that calm and holy light in which the Spirit loves to dwell." Oh! let us lay aside our mutual suspicion; let us repress our eagerness to seize and magnify differences; let us not encourage our literary organs and periodical journals to carry on a warfare of crimination and misrepresentation; let us not refer with exultation and triumph to acknowledged evils and abuses, and thus rejoice in iniquity. A truce, an everlasting truce, to such things as these, which trouble the waters, but by the foot of a demon rather than the gentle hand of an angel, and not for healing, but disease. One of the best means, one of the first signs of a revival, is a growing spirit of brotherly love among the different denominations of real Christians; and to obtain this, we must "pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting."

It may be, that in some cases a church has fallen into an unusually low state of depression and declension; its minister, discouraged and hopeless, knows not whether to remove or remain; its members, few, and lukewarm, and heartless, are looking around, not for means of a revival, but for a way of escape; all is death and desolation; and the assemblies of the Sabbath are rather like the mournful gatherings of a few surviving friends round the sepulchre of one departed, than the joyous meetings of glad hearts at a feast. Such a state of things calls for immediate and solemn consideration. No ordinary means or measures will do here; the case is all but desperate. Meetings of the pastor with his deacons to inquire into the cause should immediately take place; days of humiliation, confession, and prayer, should be forthwith appointed; and in addition to all this, it might be well to call in the aid of one or two discreet neighboring ministers, to assist the solemnities, and endeavor to give them impression and effect, by addresses to the church, and to the different classes of the congregation. Prompt, prudent, energetic measures should be adopted; it is no time to utter the mere language of complaint; the lethargy is increasing, and death is at hand.

The revival of religion in a Christian church is, as I have already stated, a common concern; there is something for every one to feel, and something for every one to do; all can help, and each should help as much as he can. Deacons and elders, a fearful degree of responsibility lies upon you! You may never yet have considered how much the spiritual prosperity of the church depends upon you. Next to the pastor, you rouse it to activity or lull it to indolence; you chill or cherish its ardor; you quicken or crush its energies. Many a worldly-minded, timid, or lukewarm deacon or elder has done more to prevent a revival than his pastor, however intent upon the work, could do to promote it. Such men paralyze the zeal of their minister; they are dead weights upon his energies, and obstacles in the way of his usefulness. Their cold skepticism about the work, their heartless indifference, their groundless suspicions, their puerile fears of novelty and fanaticism, perplex and hinder the pastor, and frighten or petrify the people. Dreadful employment of official influence! Tremble at incurring such responsibility. If you have not courage or ardor enough for your station, resign it, and retire from the front rank to the rear. But what a blessing is a spiritual, warm-hearted, prudent, devoted deacon; one who uses the office well, and is alive to every good word and

work! If, unhappily, the pastor should be indifferent to the subject of revival, let such men bring it before him in an affectionate and respectful manner. Great caution, I admit, is necessary in the management of an attempt so delicate and so difficult. They must be careful not to disgust by any thing like dictation, nor to weary by injudicious importunity; but still it is their solemn duty to bring the subject under pastoral review. On the other hand, it may be sometimes necessary for them to restrain or modify the effusions of a distempered zeal, which are poured forth by a rash and inexperienced minister, whose ardor burns with a wild and dangerous fury. But apathy, neglect, and opposition on the part of church officers, betray a state of mind unbefitting their station, and manifest indifference to religion, contempt for the pastor, disregard to the church, a strange and guilty unconcern about the salvation of immortal souls, and a fearful oblivion of their accountability to Christ.

The pious and spiritual members of the church, of both sexes, may be of great service, by continually looking round them, to notice any who appear to be under serious impression, to encourage them with kind sympathy, and to be to them as conductors to the pastor. Many a blossom of hopeful piety might be thus preserved which would be otherwise lost; and, by the blessing of God upon ministerial solicitude and vigilance, might be ripened into the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory of God. A preacher's eye cannot be on all his hearers, especially if his congregation is large; and, therefore, the eyes of the more pious of his flock should be employed for him, to observe the anxious look, the suffused eye, which indicate the anxious inquirer, and which seem to say, "What shall I do to be saved?" How eminently useful might all be in this way, and yet how few attempt it! Many would sit in selfish enjoyment, or in cold formality, in their pews for months, never speaking a word of kindness, or directing a look of sympathy to the heart-stricken, weeping, agonizing soul in the very next seat. Revivals can never be expected while such apathy remains; no, never till all the piety of the church is called forth in the way of deep interest, and energetic activity.

Pious and matronly females may and should render valuable aid to the cause of revivals, by looking after the younger of their own sex. This is a ground of usefulness which is yet almost totally unoccupied. Female agency was far more extensively employed in the primitive churches than it is in modern times. Honorable mention is made in the New Testament of "Phebe, a servant of the church of Cenchrea, a succorer of many;" of Priscilla, "who taught the eloquent Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly; who received the thanks not only of the apostles, but of all the churches of the Gentiles;" of "those women which labored with Paul in the gospel;" of Junia, who was of note among the apostles; of "Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labored in the Lord;" and of others, too numerous to mention. The order of female deaconesses, which probably once existed, has vanished from the temple of the Lord, and their ministrations have long since ceased. This is not the place to discuss the question, how far it might be necessary to revive this order; but still how much beneficial influence might pious and experienced females exert, even though they were not formally invested with the authority of office! Could they not counsel the younger women, instruct them, encourage them, pray with them, and lead them on in the ways of godliness?

How much good also may be done by the more experienced and instructed brethren of the church, in the way of Sabbath evening schools, into which may be gathered the senior children of the Sabbath-day schools, and others, who have recently left these humble seminaries, and, in consequence of their age and circumstances, are in more danger, and in more need of guidance than ever! Two or three such persons in a church, yea one, might render help to the work of revival beyond calculation.

Nor ought I to omit the efficient help which might be given by the active services of well-qualified persons in visiting the houses of the poor, according to the plan of Christian Instruction Societies. The great mass of the poor are living in the utter neglect of religion. If they hear the gospel, it must be first preached to them at their own houses. The precious treasure must be carried to them, for they are too ignorant and too indolent to go forth to seek

it. Christians! there are thousands of immortal creatures perishing in sin at your very doors! Souls are continually going down to the pit, from the houses that are on the right hand and the left of your own! What deep commiseration has been felt, and properly felt, for the population of those towns in which the ravages of the pestilence have been unusually extensive; but, oh! think of the more awful ravages of the plague of sin, which is sweeping crowds of immortal souls from your own neighborhood into everlasting misery! Men, women, and their families, are continually dropping into eternal burnings, almost before your eyes! and will you not go to their houses, and entreat them to think of their souls' welfare? If you have not much courage to speak, you can take a religious tract, and beg them to read it; and by a weekly exchange of it, you may continually supply them with a course of religious instruction, by which they may be made wise unto salvation.

Beloved brethren, let me, in conclusion, entreat you to consider the subject with all that deliberate attention, and deep seriousness, which its momentous, its infinite, its eternal importance demands. Every sign of the times, every thing in the state of the church, and every thing in the condition of the world, calls upon professing Christians to rouse from their slumber, and to look around them. Even the wise virgins are asleep, and that, too, amidst voices speaking to them from every quarter, and saying, "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light." Let these heart-stirring words enter into your souls, and call you forth to spiritual activity. Oh, that I had at command, "thoughts that glow, and words that burn!" I would turn them in a stream of impassioned eloquence upon your spirits, and endeavor to bear you away from that guilty selfishness which has engrossed the people of God, and impel you to a combined, and vigorous, and anxious effort for the revival of lukewarm professors, and the conversion of impenitent sinners! The subject has not yet laid hold of your imagination, your heart, and your conscience; it has come near to you, but has not come into you; it has been often the topic of conversation, but never of deep musing. Do consider the present aspect of the world. Old institutions are changing or falling around us; society is in a state of fluctuation and transformation; the dread of innovation has risen into almost a passion for it; the authority of venerated names and ancient systems has perished; and a grand struggle for the mastery is coming on between the spirit of infidelity and the word of God. Already the foe is in the field; his forces are marshalled; and, confident in the assurance of victory, he is preparing for the attack. Shall the church of God be supine and indolent? shall she alone be inert? shall there be revival and energy everywhere else but there? Oh, no! she must arise and gird herself for the conflict, and take to herself the whole armor of God; she must occupy a position which shall enable her to take advantage of existing circumstances, and to bend to the promotion of her interests, the changes and events which are continually transpiring on the great theatre of the world; she must be more united, more spiritual, more fervent in prayer, more zealous in action; and then will she appear "bright as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners."

II.—THE THEORY OF RELIGIOUS REVIVALS.

BY THE REV. A. BARNES, OF PHILADELPHIA, U. S.

THE following things will express what is meant by a revival of religion; or the following truths are essential elements in the theory of such a revival:

I. *There may be a radical and permanent change in a man's mind on the subject of religion.* This change it is customary to express by the word regeneration, or the new birth. It supposes that, before this, man is entirely alienated from God, and that he first begins to love him when he experiences this change. The previous state is one of sin; the subsequent is a state of holiness: the former is death, the latter is life. The former is the agitation of a troubled sea, which cannot rest; the latter calmness, peace, joy. This change is the most thorough through which the human mind ever passes. It effects a complete revolution in the man, and his opposite states are char-

acterized by words that express no other states in the human mind. This change is instantaneous. The exact amount may not be known; and the previous seriousness and anxiety may be of longer or shorter continuance; but there is a moment when the heart is changed, and when the man that was characteristically a sinner becomes characteristically a Christian. This change is always attended with feeling. The man is awakened to a sense of his danger; feels with more or less intensity, that he is a sinner; resolves to abandon his sins and seek for pardon; is agitated with conflicts of greater or less intensity on giving up his sins; finds greater or feebler obstacles in his way; and at last resolves to cast himself on the mercy of God in the Redeemer, and to become a Christian. The result is, in all cases, permanent peace and joy. It is the peace of the soul when pardon is pronounced on the guilty, and when the hope of immortal glory first dawns on a benighted mind. It may be beautifully illustrated by the loveliness of the landscape when the sun at evening breaks out after a tempest; or by the calmness of the ocean as it subsides after the storm. In the fact that such a change may occur, all Christians agree; in such a change is laid the whole theory of a revival of religion. Let many sinners simultaneously turn to God. Let conversions to Christ, instead of being few and far between, become numerous, rapidly occurring, and decided in their character, and you have all that is usually meant when we speak of revivals, so far as conversions are concerned. Still these are all individual conversions, accomplished in each case by the Holy Spirit, and in exact accordance with the design of the gospel, and evincing its glory. Each one is converted in the same way, by the same truth, by the same great agent, the Holy Spirit, as though he were alone, and not another mind had been awakened or converted. It is the conversion of a number of individuals from sin to holiness, and from Satan unto God. Look on the heavens in a clear night, and you will have an illustration of what we mean. The stars that are set in that broad zone of light which stretches over the firmament—the milky way—are single stars, each subject to its own laws, moving in its own sphere, glorious, probably, in its own array of satellites; but their rays meet and mingle—not less beautifully because the light of millions is blended together. Alone, they all show God's power and wisdom; blended they evince the same power and wisdom when he groups beauties and wonders into one. So in conversion from sin to God. Take the case of a single true conversion to God, and extend it to a community—to many individuals passing through that change, and you have all the theory of a revival of religion. It is bringing together many conversions; arresting simultaneously many minds; perhaps condensing into a single place, and into a few weeks, the ordinary work of many distant places and many years. The essential fact is, that a sinner may be converted by the agency of the Spirit of God from his sins. The same power which changes him, may change others also. Let substantially the same views, and feelings, and changes which exist in the case of the individual, exist in the case of others; let a deep seriousness pervade a community, and a spirit of prayer be diffused there; let the ordinary haunts of pleasure and vice be forsaken for the places of devotion, and you have the theory, so far as I know, of a revival of religion.

2. *The second fact is, that there may be times in the life of a Christian of unusual peace and joy.* To whatever it may be owing, it will be assumed as a fact; for the truth of which I now depend on an appeal to the Christian's own feelings—that there are times in his life of far more than usual elevation in piety; times, when his "peace is like a river," and his love to God and man "like the waves of the sea." There are times when he feels an irresistible longing for communion with God; when the breath of praise is sweet; when every thing seems to be full of God; when all his feelings prompt him to devotion; and when he becomes so impressed with the great truths of Christianity, and filled with the hope of heaven, that he desires to live only for God and for the skies. Earthly objects lose their lustre in his view; their brightest, gayest colors fade away; and an insatiable panting of soul leads him away from these to hold communion with the Redeemer. A light, pure, tranquil, constant, is shed on all the truths of religion, and the desire of the salvation of children, partners, parents, friends, of the church and of the world, enchains all the affections. Then to pray is easy and to converse with Chris-

tians and with sinners is easy, and the prospect of boundless wealth and of the brightest honors would be gladly exchanged for the privilege of converting and saving a single soul.

When this occurs in a church, and these feelings pervade any considerable portion of the people of God, there is a revival of religion so far as the church is concerned. Let Christians, as a body, live manifestly under the influence of their religion; let a feeling of devotion pervade a whole church, such as you have felt in the favored times of your piety, and there would be a revival of religion—a work of grace that would soon extend to other minds, and catch, like spreading fires, on the altars of other hearts. Let a Christian community feel on the great subjects of religion, what individual Christians sometimes feel, and should always feel, and, so far as the church is concerned, there would be all the phenomena that exist in a revival of religion. A revival in the church is a revival in individual hearts, and nothing more. It is when each individual Christian becomes more sensible of his obligations, more prayerful, more holy, and more anxious for the salvation of men. Let every professing Christian awake to what he should be, and come under the full influence of his religion, and in such a church there would be a revival. Such a sense of obligation, and such joy, and peace, and love, and zeal, in the individual members of a church, would be a revival. But in the most earnest desires for your own salvation, there is no violation of any of the proper laws of Christian action. In great, strenuous, and combined efforts for the salvation of others, in unceasing prayer for the redemption of all the world, there is no departure from the precepts of Christ, nor from the spirit which he manifested on earth.

3. *The third feature that occurs in a revival of religion, to which it is proper to direct our attention, is, that an extensive influence goes over a community, and affects with seriousness many who are not ultimately converted to God.* Many individuals are usually made serious; many gay and worldly amusements are suspended; many persons, not accustomed to go to a place of prayer, are led to the sanctuary; many, formerly indifferent to religion, or opposed to it, are now willing to converse on it; many, perhaps, are led to prayer in secret and to read the Bible, who before had wholly neglected the means of grace. Many who never enter into the kingdom of God, seem to be just on its borders, and hesitate long, whether they shall give up the world and become Christians, or whether they shall give up their serious impressions and return to their former indifference and sins. The subsiding of a revival, or the dying zeal of Christians, or some powerful temptation, or a strong returning tide of worldliness and vanity, leave many such persons still with the world, and their serious impressions vanish—perhaps to return no more.

4. *It remains only to be added as an essential feature in a revival, that it is produced by the power of the Holy Ghost.* It is not the work of man, however human agency may be employed. Imperfections there may be, and things to regret there may be—as in all that man touches there is; but the phenomenon itself we regard as the work of the Holy Ghost, alike beyond human power to produce it, and to control it. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth;" and such is the work of the Spirit, alike in an individual conversion, or in a revival of religion. The wind, sometimes gentle, sometimes terrific, sometimes sufficient only to bend the heads of the field of wheat, or to shake the leaf of the aspen, sometimes sweeping in the fury of the storm over hills and vales, illustrates the way in which God's Spirit influences human hearts. You have seen the pliant osier bend gently before the zephyr, and the flowers and the fields of grain gently wave in a summer's eve. So gently does the Spirit of God breathe upon a church and people. So calm, so lovely, so pure are those influences which incline the mind to prayer, to thought, to Christ, to heaven. You have seen the clouds grow dark in the western sky. They roll upward and onward, unfolding themselves, and throwing their ample volumes over the heavens. The lightnings play and the thunder rolls, and the tornado sweeps over hills and vales, and the proud oak crashes on the mountains. "The wind blows where it pleases;" and thus, too, the Spirit of God passes with more than human power over a community, and many a stout-hearted sinner, like the quivering elm or oak, trembles under the influences of truth They see a dark cloud gathering in the

sky; they hear the thunder of justice; they see the heavens flash along their guilty path; and they are prostrated before God, like the forest before the mighty tempest. The storm passes by, and the sun rides serene again in the heavens, and the universal nature smiles—beautiful emblem of the effect of a revival of religion.

III.—ON PROMOTING AND CONDUCTING REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

BY REV. H. HUMPHREY, D. D., PRESIDENT OF AMHERST COLLEGE, U. S.*

You have probably been waiting with some anxiety to hear what I have to say on revivals of religion. This, I confess, is a subject on which you have a right to expect the maturest thoughts that I have been able to gather from reading, observation, experience, and reflection. But I must not conceal from you that I approach it with the deepest solicitude. There is not, within the whole range of ministerial and pastoral duty, a more important topic, nor one where wrong advice would be more hurtful to the cause of pure and undefiled religion. I dare not advance a step without fervent prayer to God for that "wisdom which is from above."

This anxiety does not arise from the slightest doubt, that there are "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," in which the churches are greatly quickened, and sinners are simultaneously awakened, convicted, and converted. I have no more doubt that God does thus pour out his Spirit than I have that he gives showers in summer, or snow in winter. But the more I see and hear of revivals, and the more I reflect on the subject, the more difficult does it appear to me to lay down general rules for the guidance of young ministers in conducting them; and the more wisdom does it seem to require to so co-operate with the Holy Spirit, as in reaping the harvest, to "gather the most fruit unto life eternal!" You may be too fast, or too slow, and you may do too much, or too little; you may call in too much help from abroad, or not enough; you may have too many meetings, or too few; may lay too much of the work upon your church, or not enough; and may be too hasty, or too slow in the admission of converts. After all that can be said you will be in constant danger of erring on one side or the other. Your only safety lies in "asking wisdom of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Still, the results of experience are worth something, and it would be wrong for a father, in a series of letters like this, to withhold these results from a beloved son.

In conducting a revival of religion, the pastor has his proper sphere of action and responsibility, and the church has its sphere. Certain duties devolve upon him which he cannot lay upon the church, and certain other duties rest upon the church which it cannot shift off upon the pastor. In what I now have to say I shall confine myself to the former class of duties, reserving such thoughts as I might offer upon the duties of churches, for their proper place in another series of letters, should I live to write them. What you want is advice, of which you can avail yourself in the discharge of your own duties as a laborer in the vineyard of Christ. I cannot engage to answer all your questions, even to my own satisfaction; but I will do the best I can, within the limits to which I must confine myself. To do any thing like justice to this one branch of the subject, would require more than a volume. They are hints and conclusions, rather than full and well-reasoned answers, which I send you.

Your first question is, On what ground are those seasons of great and general religious interest, called revivals, desirable? And here you tell me that some good men rather dread than welcome them. Their objections are, that they do not like these periodical excitements; that the churches ought always to be awake and active, and that if they were the Spirit would never cease to strive with sinners; that there are spurious, as well as genuine revivals, in which vastly more hurt than good is done; and that they greatly prefer the nightly dews of Hermon, ever fresh and ever sparkling, to occasional showers, however copious, which leave the streams to dry up, and every green thing to languish in the intervals.

These objections, I acknowledge, are plausible, but they are not new, or hard to obviate. Excitement, if it exist at all, must, from the nature of man, be temporary. It may return after longer or shorter intervals, but it cannot last always; and why

* From Letters to his Son in the Ministry.

should it be objected to in religion, any more than where vastly inferior interests are at stake? Nobody complains of excitement when a ship has drifted on to the breakers, and a hundred persons are seen clinging to the wreck, nor when half a city is on fire in the night, nor where the politics of a state or a town are to be changed. And can any good reason be given, why, when the great majority of a congregation are slumbering on the brink of eternal ruin, they should not, if possible, be alarmed, and excited "to flee from the wrath to come?" I know there may be very different kinds of religious excitement connected with revivals. There is the excitement of sympathy, the excitement of mere animal feeling, the excitement of a heated imagination. These, where they show themselves, and threaten to gain the ascendency, are rather to be repressed than encouraged. But there is also the excitement of well-grounded fear, of agonized conviction, when the fountains of the great deep of depravity in the soul are, as it were, broken up, and the sinner sees himself justly exposed to the wrath and curse of God forever. And will any one say that he has no reason to be excited, to be alarmed? But if one person has, why have not a hundred, or five hundred, who lie under the same condemnation? If, in the midst of a revival, the excitement should assume any thing like a heated and fanatical aspect, this would be a good reason for alarm, and for the prompt application of counteracting influences; but none for dreading religious excitement of the right kind, and when kept within due bounds. Were not the three thousand nighly excited on the day of Pentecost, when they were pricked in the heart, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" What pious minister would not rejoice to witness just such a scene in his own congregation? And were he to witness something like it several times in the course of his ministry, would he have any reason to dread these periodical excitements?

That the churches ought always to cherish the reviving influence of the Holy Spirit; always to be awake, active, and prayerful; and that it is delightful to enjoy what may be called a constant revival, as is the case when some of the congregation are always in an inquiring state, and one after another pressing into the kingdom, I readily grant. Whatever may have been the economy of his grace in some ages or countries, revivals have been common in the most flourishing state of the church, from the day of Pentecost down to our own times; and it admits not of a doubt, that a vast majority of the most devoted members of the American churches have, within the last forty years, been brought in by revivals. The great body of the most laborious and successful ministers now on the stage in this country were converted in revivals, and so were nearly all our foreign missionaries. And I think we have every reason to believe from the prophecies and from the operations of the Spirit, both at home and abroad, that, as the millennium approaches, revivals will become more and more frequent and powerful, till the earth is "filled with the knowledge and glory of the Lord." Are they not then exceedingly to be desired in every place, especially as, judging from the experience of our churches for nearly half a century, there is but little probability that sinners will be converted at all if these showers are withheld?

Your next question is, What are the best means of promoting revivals? Or, to put the question in a more definite shape, "As there is at present no especial religious interest in my church and congregation, what can I do to arouse Christians from their slumbers, and to awaken and convert impenitent sinners?"

In laboring for a revival, it is not necessary that you should "sound a trumpet before you." There is no charm in the word revival, to quicken saints or to awaken sinners. Revivals are not regarded by the world as they were twenty years ago. Then they were attended with such demonstrations of the power of God, they were conducted in so orderly a manner, and their influence was so happy and abiding, that the most sharp-sighted opposer of evangelical religion could find very little to say against them. But since that time they have, in some parts of the country, been brought into great discredit by the indiscretion (to use the mildest term) of evangelists and others, whom their admirers are wont to call revival preachers. In the minds of some intelligent, but not religious men, almost everywhere, the word *revival* is synonymous with mere animal excitement, with "anxious seats," with rant, and with the wildest fanaticism. The consequence is, that the term has become ex-

ceedingly odious to individuals of this class, and cannot be mentioned without bringing up a great many associations, which are hostile to all religious impressions. They think at once of all the disorders they have witnessed, or heard of; of what is reproachfully called the getting up of revivals; of the machinery by which they are sometimes carried on; of the rending of churches and the dismission of ministers; and without making any distinction between those revivals which are genuine and those which are spurious, these persons are so prejudiced against them all, that the bare mention of the name puts them at once in a hostile attitude.

Now, "he that winneth souls is wise;" and where prejudices are known to exist against words or phrases which are not found in the Bible, he will avoid them, and substitute others which convey the meaning just as well. This is what I would advise you to do in the case before us. What you want are the blessed influences and fruits of a revival, and not the name. If, by the blessing of God on your labors, your church should be excited to fervent, believing prayer and holy living, and great numbers of sinners should be awakened and converted by the Holy Spirit, there would be a revival; you would have the substance, which is all you need to care for. If, therefore, you know, or have reason to think, that any of your hearers are prejudiced against revivals, in consequence of the disorders which, under ignorant and fanatical management, sometimes attend them, why should you use the term in your preaching, when you can just as well employ all the appropriate means without it? These means are,

First, searching, direct, and discriminating preaching. "The sword of the Spirit is the word of God." The church is to be aroused; and to this end you must bring the truth to bear directly upon it, with all the earnestness and power you can command. You must preach to Christians a great deal. You must point out to them the guilt and danger of backsliding, in the most vivid colors. You must ply them with every motive and argument that can be drawn from the scriptures, to "repent and do their first works." You must exhort them to examine the foundation of their hopes, and point out the many dangers of self-deception to which they are exposed. You must urge them to aim at a high standard of personal piety; to dedicate themselves anew to God; to consecrate all their power and influence to his service, and to pray without ceasing for the conversion of sinners, and the building up of the church. So long as the church slumbers, there is but little hope that the impenitent will be awakened.

But any discouragement you may meet with in trying to wake up the church, must not hinder you from making the most solemn, direct, and affectionate appeals to the congregation. "All things are possible with God." He may bless your efforts to alarm the stupid sinner, if you cannot arouse the sleeping professor. But mere exhortation will not do. The impenitent need instruction. They need to have the grounds of God's righteous condemnation clearly pointed out to them. Their consciences must be probed to the bottom. The naked sword of the Spirit must be wielded with a strong and steady hand. Without a course of discriminating and instructive preaching, both to the church and the congregation, there can be very little hope of a revival; nor with it even, unless it is sanctified by earnest prayer for the descent of the Holy Ghost. Nor must you rest here. You must labor out of the pulpit, as well as in the pulpit. You must visit the members of the church, and converse with them privately, and try to stir them up to self-examination, to secret and social prayer, and to such efforts as they can make for the conversion of their impenitent friends and neighbors. You will not have done all your duty till you have enlisted as much prayer and effort as you possibly can in the church.

Another means which you can use for promoting a revival is, to visit the impenitent with this express object in view, and wherever you can gain a hearing, to converse tenderly with them upon their spiritual and eternal interests. Such labors of love are often eminently blessed, and revivals are sometimes begun, which issue in the flocking of a multitude of souls to Christ.

Holding meetings for prayer and preaching, on week days, in different sections of the parish, is another means which God often blesses to the same end. Indeed a minister, who contents himself with his two sermons on the sabbath, can hardly ex-

pect to see the work of the Lord revived among his people. The impression wears off, if it is not renewed in the prayer meeting and the lecture room; but as far as my observation has gone, multiplying religious meetings, where there is no special interest, seldom does any good. They are commonly but poorly attended, the pastor is disheartened, the church is discouraged, and "all things continue as they were." It does no good to hold extra meetings, unless the people will come together. We must begin further back. There must be more prayer, more labor with the church, more in the Bible class and Sabbath-school, and more visiting from house to house. As soon as there is a demand for extra preaching, let the people have it. "When thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, thou shalt bestir thyself; for then shall the Lord go out before thee."

This seems to be as good a place as any other, to say something about four days' meetings and other special means, which have been extensively used in the American churches, with various success. I do not object to what are called protracted meetings, provided they are judiciously timed, and not too much protracted. I believe, that in many places they have been greatly blessed. When they were first introduced, and for a considerable time after they had become quite common, the churches felt the importance of preparing for them by prayer and fasting. On account of the novelty, many persons were induced to attend them, who could not probably have been brought under the means of grace in any other way. Their attention was arrested. They were induced to go again and again, and the truth being thus steadily kept before their minds from day to day, was set home by the Spirit of God with saving power upon their hearts.

But I am equally well convinced, that the system has been carried too far, and relied upon too much. In fact, it may be said to have been entirely worn out, where it was once in the highest repute. I could mention sections of the country, where these meetings have signally failed, and where the reaction has been tremendous. Many once flourishing churches, I fear, will not recover from it for many years to come. So great, for a considerable time, was the popularity and apparent success of protracted meetings, during which al business was nearly suspended by the mul titudes who flocked to them, that both ministers and people came at length to feel, as if there was an inseparable connection between these meetings and powerful revivals. Indeed, many seemed to talk and act as if they could not expect revivals without them. Under this impression, if four days (the period to which they were at first limited) did not answer the purpose, they would add four, or six, or ten days more; and so they actually went on, increasing the length up to twenty, thirty, and even forty days, without giving either preachers or hearers any time for rest. The consequence was, that hundreds of the most spiritual members of the churches sunk down exhausted under the pressure. All the excitability in the congregations, which could be brought under the influence of the meet ings, was used up, and the collapse was ir some cases truly deplorable. This, I know, was not the fault of the system, but of the abuse of it; and I am not ignorant, that this high pressure has recently been kept up for a long time in some of the Baptist churches of Boston, by a celebrated evangelist of that very respectable denomination. Of the fruits and results of this long protracted excitement, it will be safer to speak with confidence a year or two hence, than it is now. In the congregational churches of New England, so far as my knowledge extends, there is now very little anxiety manifested for four days' meetings, upon the old plan. Evening meetings have of late been extensively substituted in a quiet way, and often with the best results. The people are invited to assemble for a number of successive evenings, to hear the gospel preached by their own pastors, aided perhaps more or less by brethren in the immediate vicinity. Under this arrangement, where there is interest enough to secure a full attendance, and where "all things are done decently and in order," we may reasonably expect that good will be done. But this, in turn, will probably be pushed to extremes, and then the most judicious friends of revivals will resort to some other means, to wake up slumbering churches, and arrest the attention of stupid sinners.

Indeed it is my prevailing opinion, that any system of extra efforts which can be devised, will be unwarrantably relied upon or wear out in time, and must be laid aside.

Whenever this is the case, it cannot be doubted that those who ask wisdom of God in a right manner, will be directed to such other means as he will bless for the building up of his church. But they must be scriptural means; means that have no tendency to throw the sabbath or any of the divinely instituted ministrations of the sanctuary into the background. Any system which aims at doing up the whole work of the Lord in a few days, or which leads a people to undervalue the stated administration of his truth, on the day which he has set apart expressly for religious instruction, is dangerous. Whatever else may be right or wrong in our arrangements and efforts, we are sure that it is right to make as much as possible of the sabbath, and the regular preaching of the gospel, as well before a revival commences, as when it is in full progress.

Your next question is, How shall I know when a revival is begun in my church and congregation? I should once have thought it much easier to answer this question than I do now. I have so many times had my hopes raised by favorable appearances, and been disappointed; have so often thought there was "the sound of abundance of rain," and it did not come, that I am much slower to decide whether a revival has actually commenced or not, than I used to be. No certain evidence of it can be drawn from observing that your meetings are crowded, still, and solemn; that some individuals are affected even to tears under your preaching; that inquirers begin to resort to your study, and that the church is very much encouraged. All these are favorable indications, and may well excite your hopes, while they stimulate you to increased effort and prayer. But they may pass away "as the morning cloud and the early dew." I have myself experienced several such alternations of hope and discouragement, before the revival actually came. There are, however, signs and evidences on which you may rely. If there are great searchings of heart in the church; if old hopes are shaken; if differences of long standing are healed by mutual confessions; if Christians are remarkably humble and prayerful, if they speak often one to another, and if their bowels yearn over the impenitent, there is a revival begun. There can be no doubt of it; and when in connection with such a state of things in the church, sinners in considerable numbers are awakened, when you find here and there cases of genuine conviction, and some individuals giving striking evidence that they have been born again, you need not doubt that a real work of grace has commenced in the congregation as well as in the church; but even then you should guard against expressing yourself too sanguinely, when you speak on the subject, and should exhort the church to "rejoice with trembling." It is not certain, that because God has begun to revive his work, he will carry it on; that because a few have been converted, many more will be. The Holy Spirit may be grieved, and may depart ere you have sung out your first song. While the grace of God, which is displayed in a single conversion, is infinite, and worthy to be magnified in everlasting thanksgiving, I am convinced, that incipient revivals are sometimes checked by the confident and sanguine manner in which ministers speak of them. They run before the Spirit of the Lord. Fewer are under deep religious impressions than they imagine, though many may be inquiring. They "look for much, and it comes to little."

CHAPTER II.

I have a vivid recollection of the first revival under my own ministry, almost thirty years ago. It is surprising how many questions a young and inexperienced pastor wants to ask at such a time; and it is certainly the duty of a father to answer as many of them as he can, when they are asked by a beloved son in the ministry.

Your people now begin to call in earnest for more religious instruction. Deaf ears are unstopped. Your congregation on the sabbath is increased, and there is a general solemnity throughout the house. Your week-day meetings are thronged. Those who never used to attend them at all, now wish to meet every night, and you will undoubtedly be requested by some of the best members of your church to gratify them. You will be told, that when the Lord works, he expects his servants to rise up and build with all their might, and it is true. Extra labors and more frequent meetings are undoubtedly called for; but when you ask me how many, I cannot tell. No general rule can be given. It must depend upon a great many circumstances, which are never exactly similar in any two congregations,

and which are almost daily changing during a revival, even in the same congregation. I have no doubt, that where a people have not regularly enjoyed the instruction of a faithful and orthodox ministry, they need more preaching when the Spirit is poured out, than those who have been better taught. And I am quite sure, that wherever a revival continues six months, or even three months, more meetings are required some weeks than others. As a general rule, I believe there ought to be more preaching in the early part of a revival than towards the close, or even than when it has been long enough in progress fully to develop its character.

But although it is impossible to give definite advice without being on the spot and knowing all the circumstances, there are certain general principles which you should study, and which will help you to a right decision. There is what may be called demand and supply, in the religious state of a community, as well as in its economical state. This demand is far greater when Christians are revived and the Spirit of God is striving with sinners, than when there is no special excitement; and it ought to be promptly and fully met. There can be no excuse for not feeding the hungry as often and as much as they need, when "there is bread enough in our Father's house and to spare." You must meet your people much oftener, and furnish them with more preaching in the midst of a revival, than would be either necessary or profitable under different circumstances. Were you merely to preach, and to preach ever so well on the sabbath, or to add only one more good sermon about the middle of the week, you would not meet the demand. Those who are inquiring what they must do to be saved, and those who are beginning to feel a little interest, would be liable to lose it in the intervals. If awakened sinners are not addressed often, they are very apt to become stupid again; and if the stupid are not addressed more than once a week, after the sabbath, there is great danger that they will never be thoroughly awakened at all; but there is danger of going to the opposite extreme. Meetings may be multiplied too much; and I believe this is the more common error. They may crowd so closely upon each other as to leave very little time for retirement, reading the scriptures, and secret prayer; or may, in a few weeks, so deaden the sensibilities of saints and sinners by mere exhaustion, as to disqualify them for deriving any advantage from preaching, even on the sabbath. There cannot be a greater mistake than to suppose, that the power of continuance of a revival must be in proportion to the number of week-day meetings. I have known revivals seriously checked, and they have often been stopped, by multiplying meetings too much. Some ministers and many excellent members of the church infer, that because two or three extra sermons in a week are obviously blessed in the awakening and conversion of sinners, adding more public labor must give an increased impulse to the work; but I venture to say, there is nothing either in scripture, in the constitution of the human mind, or in general experience to justify such a conclusion. There are limits beyond which all extra public labors are worse than lost. No man in the world, whether converted or unconverted, can hear preaching two or three times a day, week in and week out, to any advantage. What good does it do to keep pouring into a vessel which is already full? What judicious physician or nurse would give a sick man food faster than he can digest it, because he has a craving appetite? Even the most healthy person in the world, cannot be always indulging himself at a well-spread table. So far as a revival is to be carried on by preaching, the great thing is to keep up a healthy attention, and to give the people instruction as fast as they can receive it, but no faster.

As I said before, it is impossible to lay down any general rule with regard to the frequency of public meetings. Every pastor must judge for himself, in view of the existing state of things in his congregation. I have never seen a revival, (and I have witnessed several in which the Spirit of the Lord wrought mightily,) but I have never seen one, which in my judgment required more than two sermons a week in the church or lecture-room, besides three regular services on the sabbath. During the very remarkable revival of 1821, in P——, of which you must have some remembrance, we had a general inquiry meeting on Monday evening, preaching on Tuesday evening, a meeting for prayer on Thursday evening, and preaching again on Friday evening Besides these there were lectures in remote parts of the town, to interest as many as

we could and bring them to the centre, and for the benefit of those who could not regularly come. There were also many little prayer-meetings in the several neighborhoods. In looking back to that memorable season, I think we had quite as many meetings as the mighty progress of the revival called for, and subsequent experience has confirmed the opinion which I then formed, that the state of things must be very peculiar to require more, I mean, after the work has fairly commenced. If Christians had nothing else to do but attend meetings, and if sinners had nothing else to do but to hear preaching; if they had no Bibles to read, and no private instruction to receive, and no wicked and deceitful hearts to examine, and no secret places in which to pray, the case would be different; but if "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation;" if there is any danger of too much running abroad and outward bustle, to the neglect of private duties, then we should be on our guard not to let the public means of grace in a revival encroach too much upon the religion of the family and the closet. That Christian must have been very superficial in self-examination, who does not know how much easier it is to attend public meetings, than to keep his heart right with God in the closet, and must be very forgetful, not to remember how much easier it was for him, when he was awakened, to hear sermons and exhortations, than to shut himself up with his Bible, with his own impenitent heart, and his God.

Your next question is, Who shall do the preaching? And my unhesitating answer is, Do as much of it as you can yourself. You are the pastor. You know the state and wants of your flock better than any other man. The people know you better, and have more confidence in you as a spiritual guide and religious teacher. They are used to your preaching. Your style and trains of thought and illustrations are all familiar to them. With ordinary health, you can preach oftener during a revival than at any other time. It is vastly easier. If you enter into the work of the Lord with all your heart, you will never be at a loss for suitable topics. They will be suggested to your mind faster than you can dispose of them. You cannot expect to get much time to write, it is true; nor will it be necessary. It will astonish you to find, with what freedom you can speak on almost any subject, and at the shortest notice. Thoughts and words will come to you as they never did before. In this there will be nothing supernatural—no miraculous gifts; but the Spirit of God will help you and you will be able, without much exposure, to accomplish more than you could beforehand have believed possible, under any circumstances. My belief is, that some young pastors, under erroneous impression that their strength will not hold out, call in aid sooner than they need to, and rely more upon it, as the work advances, than is best either for them or their people.

But should the revival, which has commenced in L——, spread through the congregation, you will undoubtedly want help, at least in the pulpit. There will be a demand for more sermons than you can preach, constantly engaged as you must be in visiting and directing inquiring souls to Christ; and let me advise you by all means to call in pastors in preference to evangelists. This was the course pursued with the happiest effects in the great revivals which took place in Connecticut and Massachusetts, just at the close of the last century, under the preaching of Strong, West, Hallock, Mills, Griffin, Hooker, Miller, Hyde, Williams, and others "of the like precious faith." No evangelists were then employed to help the pastors, or to take the work out of their hands, as has been so common within your own remembrance. When a minister wanted help, he invited his brethren in the immediate vicinity to preach his lectures, and render him whatever other assistance he might need. They felt that they were all engaged in one common cause; there was preaching enough; the work went on gloriously, continued for a long time, and the fruits of it were most precious.

You might, perhaps, find some celebrated evangelist who would be glad to help you; and I have known preachers of this class in whom you might have entire confidence. But for reasons, which will readily occur to any one who has watched the progress of things for a few years past, and which I reserve for the serious consideration of the churches, I hope you will not find it necessary to go much, if any, beyond the pastoral circle around you for help. The greatest objection, as I shall endeavor to show lies against employing professed revivalists

They are the men who, though they may seem to do much good for the time, are most likely in the end to unsettle and weaken the churches.

But let who will be called in to aid you, keep the direction of things entirely in your own hands. Appoint all the meetings; suffer no measures to be introduced which you do not approve of; and let it be seen everywhere that you are the pastor, and that you feel responsible to God, not only for what you do yourself, but for what others do under your eye and sanction.

Let who will come to assist you, preach yourself as often as you can. If you have three discourses on the sabbath, by all means preach one of them, if not two. No pastor can long hold his place, and retain the affections and confidence of his people, who allows himself to be thrust into the background, or voluntarily sits by in silence, sabbath after sabbath, during a powerful revival.

You next wish for my advice in regard to the kind of preaching which is best suited to awaken and convert sinners in the progress of a revival. I feel and acknowledge the vital importance of this inquiry. It is of but little consequence who the preacher is, compared with what he preaches. If fundamental error is preached it will do infinite harm, even though it were to come from the lips of an apostle, or of "an angel from heaven." And even the truth may do but little good, if it is not adapted to the existing state of things in the congregation. How injudicious it would be, for example, to preach upon the being of a God, when sinners come together to learn what they must do to be saved, though this is a truth which lies at the foundation of all religion. Who would think of turning off a crowd of anxious inquirers with a learned discourse upon the first verse in Genesis, or the return of the Jews to their own land, or the scriptural mode and subjects of baptism? Such a discourse might be very able and very convincing, and yet it would be entirely out of place. There is no reason to think that a thousand such sermons would convert one sinner. It is by no means certain, that because a sermon is sound and orthodox it must do good, let the state and circumstances of the congregation be what they may. Is it to the purpose? Does it meet the present condition and wants of the people? "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable." It is all true, from Genesis to Revelation; but it no more follows that every truth is equally well suited to all times and seasons, and to persons of all ages, conditions, and characters, than it does that all kinds of wholesome food are suited to the sick and the well, the feeble and the strong, the babe and the full-grown man.

As God has evidently begun a special work of grace in your congregation, it is your duty to dwell almost exclusively upon those subjects which are best adapted to humble and rouse the church, to alarm the careless, to convince sinners of their guilt as well as of their fearful exposure, to strip them of all their vain excuses, to bring them at once to the foot of the cross, to guard them against false hopes, and to prepare them for a safe and well-grounded profession of faith in Christ. To these points let all your energies for the present be directed. The proper time will come to introduce other topics, but you must wait for it. This is your harvest time, and the Lord of the harvest expects you to gather as much wheat as you possibly can into his garner. It would not be strange if, in the midst of this revival, some zealous agent should come along, and want to present the claims of his favorite society to your people; nor, should you object on account of the peculiar state of things, would it be strange if he were to tell you, that he has no belief in the genuineness of a revival which would be checked by the discussion of any great philanthropic question by which the public mind is, or ought to be agitated. And what if he does not believe that his preaching on a subject quite foreign from the immediate conversion of sinners, would have any tendency to stop the revival, by diverting the minds of inquirers from the "great salvation?" He may be entirely mistaken; and whose belief is to govern in such a case, yours or his? Who is responsible, the pastor or this stranger? The truth is, that in certain stages of a revival any thing, any subject, aside from the work which is going on, may do infinite mischief, by being thrust in, and crowding out the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" Over and over again have I witnessed such a state of things among my own people, that I would not have yielded my place in the pulpit to any agent whatever for a single half-day. I

could not have done it with a clear conscience. "The children had come to the birth." The loss of that one opportunity might be fatal to many; a few hours' neglect, and they might perish.

Should the revival with which you are now blessed, go on with power, there will be times when you will feel that certain subjects must be brought forward immediately. They cannot be postponed a week, or even a day, without extreme hazard. And what now, if an agent were to come and ask you for that sabbath? Could you spare it? Would you not say to him, "Brother, I am glad to see you, and if you will lay aside your particular object, and preach with special reference to the state of my congregation, I shall be glad of your assistance; but if not, you must come again." I am sure you would—I am sure you ought; and the man who should blame you for it, would show either a great want of interest, or of experience in revivals.

Let your preaching be as direct, pungent, and searching as you can make it; spend no time in rounding and polishing your periods; bring out the truth in its naked majesty, and let the drapery go; give backsliding and lukewarm professors no peace; tell them honestly, that you fear they have no religion—nothing but the form; that they are stumbling-blocks in the way of sinners; that instead of helping forward the work, they weaken the church, and hang as dead weights upon the chariot wheels of salvation. Warn sinners night and day, as Paul did, with tears. If any of them "sleep on," let it be under the quaking and thunderings of Sinai.

There is happily but little difference of opinion among sound and evangelical ministers, in regard to the topics which ought to be chiefly insisted on in revivals of religion.

"The following," says Dr. Wayland, in the Appendix to Sprague's Letters, "I believe to be some of the most important. The entire want of holiness of all men by nature; the justice of God in the everlasting condemnation of sinners; the exceeding sinfulness of sin; the entire inability of man, by his own works, to reconcile himself to God; the sufficiency, freedom, and fulness of the atonement; the duty of immediate repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ; the inexcusableness of delay; the exhibition of the refuges of lies under which sinners hide themselves; the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners; the clear exhibition of the truth, that he is under no manner of obligation to save them; and the necessity of the agency of the Spirit of God to the conversion of any individual of the human race."

Dr. Hyde, whom you well remember as the patriarch of Berkshire county, Massachusetts, and whose labors were remarkably blessed in revivals of religion, tells us, that the substance of his preaching at such times was, "The holiness and immutability of God; the purity and perfection of his law; the entire depravity of the heart, consisting of voluntary opposition to God and holiness; the fulness and all-sufficiency of the atonement made by Christ; the freeness of the offer of pardon made to all, on condition of repentance; the necessity of a change of heart by the Holy Spirit, arising from the deep-rooted depravity of men, which no created arm could remove; the utter inexcusableness of sinners in rejecting the kind overtures of mercy, as they act freely and voluntarily in doing it; and the duty and reasonableness of immediate submission to God."

These, for substance, are the doctrines which have been preached and most eminently blessed in American revivals, from the days of Edwards, Whitfield, and Bellamy, to the present hour, and which, I have no doubt, God will continue to bless down to the end of time. They place God on the throne, and the sinner in the dust, as a rebel justly doomed to death; they bring the law to bear, with all its reasonable claims, and all its terrible denunciations, directly upon the sinner's conscience; they show him that there is but one way of escape, and that so wicked is his heart he will never avail himself of it, unless made "willing in the day of God's power;" they bring him in guilty, before the whole universe, of "destroying himself," and prepare him, when plucked as "a brand from the burning," to ascribe his deliverance to the infinite grace and mercy of God.

The more thorough you are in your preaching, my son, the more you exalt God; the more you lay open the windings and desperate wickedness of the human heart; the more clearly you prove the impossibility of the sinner's ever being justified by the deeds of the law; the more you press him with the guilt and ingratitude of

rejecting Christ, the deeper and more genuine will be his convictions, and the greater the probability that his conversion will be radical and saving. He may, it is true, be self-deceived after all; but it is much more difficult to get a false hope under such preaching, than where the preaching is superficial and indefinite. "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly." Have we not reason to fear that this has been the case in some places where converts have been counted by scores, if not by hundreds?

Let your appeals, my dear E., be to the hearts and consciences of your hearers, and not to their animal sympathies. It is perfectly easy, when the attention of large numbers is once called up, to work upon the passions, and produce a powerful excitement; and many a genuine revival, I have no doubt, has in this way degenerated into the wildest fanaticism. Nervous sensibility, pouring itself out in tears, and groans, and shouting, is not conviction, nor conversion, though often mistaken for both. A breathless silence under the simple exhibition of divine truth, as if the day of judgment was just at hand, is a much surer indication of the presence and striving of the Spirit, than those swoonings and outcries which are sometimes encouraged by professed revival preachers. A judicious pastor, who is at all acquainted with the history of the church, and the philosophy of the human mind, will be so far from trying to work upon the sympathies of his audience, especially when a single spark might kindle them into a flame, that he will hold them in check as long as he can; and if you ask him, why he is so much afraid of high excitement, he will tell you it is because it is so apt to be mistaken for conviction, and because it unfits the awakened sinner for taking those discriminating and rational views of divine truth, which are in the highest degree important, if not absolutely essential to his conversion. Till sinners are brought to realize their danger, there is no hope of their "fleeing from the wrath to come;" but the more self-possessed they can be kept, the more will they be profited by sound scriptural instruction, and the less likely will they be to take up with a false hope.

Some celebrated revival preachers make conversion one of the easiest things in the world. They tell the sinner, that he can submit to God and become a Christian, just as easy as he can rise from his seat, or turn over his hand. It is a simple act of the will. He has only to resolve that he will turn right about—that he will renounce the world and serve the Lord, and the thing is done; he is a Christian, and may "go on his way rejoicing." This is a very short method, certainly, and extremely well calculated to allay the fears of the sinner, if he can be made to believe it. He will be likely either to form the resolution in his own strength, and so settle down upon a false hope, or to say in his heart, "If it is so easy a thing to repent, then I can repent at any future time just as well as now, and I will give myself no more trouble about it. Surely one of the easiest things in the world may be done, though it should be postponed to the very last hour of life."

But where do these preachers get their authority for saying, that it is so easy for one to "break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by turning unto God?" Do they find it in the Bible? Where? In what book or chapter, either of the Old Testament or the New? Sinners are certainly in many places commanded to repent. Salvation is offered to the vilest, without money and without price; and we are abundantly taught, that there is nothing but their own voluntary depravity in the way of their accepting the offer. They may have the pearl of great price if they will take it as a gift. But all this is very different from saying, that it is an easy thing for the enemies of God to become his friends; for those who are "dead in trespasses and sins, to wake and rise from the dead, that Christ may give them life."

The truth is, that the scriptures represent it not as the easiest, but as one of the hardest things in the world, to turn from the love and practice of sin to the love and practice of holiness. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye who are accustomed to do evil learn to do well." "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." "An evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil." "No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." I might quote many other passages of the same import, but these are

sufficient to prove, that it is a hard thing for a sinner to comply with the offers of the gospel, and become reconciled to God—so hard, that without divine assistance no one will ever repent. Let those who represent to the awakened sinner that it is perfectly easy, tell him in what sense it is easy. If they explain their meaning to be, that there is nothing in the way but his own rebellious and wicked heart, it is all very true; but is it easy to conquer a wicked and rebellious heart? Ask him, and he will reply, "I find it the hardest thing I ever attempted in my life. I would give all I have in the world if I could repent, but I cannot. When you tell me, that nothing hinders but the obstinacy of my own heart, it is the same thing as telling me that nothing hinders but the greatest of all possible hinderances, for I feel that nothing short of divine power can remove it." This is just what thousands have felt when under conviction; it is what sinners feel every day, where there are genuine revivals of religion; and I might appeal to "a great cloud of witnesses," in the church militant and the church triumphant, that they found it infinitely hard to repent, till God took away their stony hearts, and gave them hearts of flesh. Urge upon the sinner the immediate duty of repentance, as if you was pleading with him to escape from a burning house. You cannot be too importunate. Tell him he is entirely inexcusable for remaining impenitent a single moment, since there is nothing in the way but his own criminal backwardness; but do not tell him it is an easy thing to repent. If he knows any thing about "the plague of his own heart," he will not, he cannot believe you; and if he has never felt it, you will in all probability lull him into a fatal stupidity.

As you will sometimes hear preachers calling upon sinners to repent, without ever clearly explaining what they mean by repentance, so you will hear them ringing all the changes they can think of upon the word submission. "You are rebels; you must submit; you must throw down your arms. Have you submitted? When will you submit? If you do not submit, you must perish;" and much more to the same purpose. Now, I do not object to such appeals when properly explained, although it should be borne in mind by every preacher, that this is not the phraseology in which Christ and his apostles addressed their impenitent hearers. It was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Repent, and believe the gospel." God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Urging sinners to submit—to submit—to submit, without showing them clearly what true gospel submission is, and how it differs from supreme selfishness, is moving in a circle; and I am afraid that many, under such preaching, think they have submitted, without understanding the true meaning of the term, and while their hearts are as full of rebellion as ever.

Some preachers are afraid to tell the sinner, after having earnestly exhorted him to repent, that he is entirely dependent upon the Holy Spirit for a new heart, lest he should be discouraged, and charge them with contradicting in one sermon what they had said in another. But what contradiction or inconsistency is there between the two propositions, that it is the sinner's immediate duty to repent, and that nothing short of the power of God will ever bring him to repentance? It is perfectly true, that nothing but his own desperate depravity hinders him; that he might repent if he would. It is perfectly true, also, that God alone can subdue and melt his stubborn heart. In other words, the only thing which makes divine efficiency necessary is, he is so obstinate and wicked, that nothing short of Almighty power can ever bring him to the foot of the cross.

And to this point, my son, you must bring him; here you must shut him up, or he will escape you. Till he is convinced of the total depravity of his heart; till he is brought to see that this affords him no excuse for his impenitence, and to despair of ever helping himself, there is no ground to hope that he will smite upon his breast with the publican, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Preach to him so as to make him believe, that with his wicked heart he can repent whenever he pleases, and he will either dismiss his fears, or embrace a false hope. On the other hand, preach to him so as to make him believe that he has no power to repent, and he will make no effort; he will sit stupidly down, and "wait God's time" to convert him. He must be made to see and feel that he is helpless, and that his helplessness is criminal, before he will cast himself upon the mercy of God, through a Redeemer

I cannot dismiss this topic without quoting a paragraph from Dr. Griffin's letter to Dr. Sprague, in 1832 :—

"Sinners have been constantly urged to immediate repentance, and every excuse has been taken away. At the same time, we have not denied or concealed their dependence, for the sake of convincing them of their obligations. On the contrary, we have esteemed it vital to urge that dependence, in order to drive them from all reliance on their own strength, and to make them die to every hope from themselves. All that you can possibly gain by flattering their independence, is to extort a confession of their obligations; for, as to matter of fact, they will not submit until they are made willing in the day of God's power; and if you can fasten upon them their obligations, without that falsehood which robs God of his glory, pray let it be done. This we have found it possible to do. We have shown them that their obligations rest on their faculties, and are as reasonable and as complete as though the thing required was merely to walk across the floor; that their faculties constitute a natural ability—that is, a full power to love and serve God, if their hearts were well-disposed—leaving nothing in the way but a bad heart, for which they are wholly to blame, if there is any blame in the universe; that sin can rest nowhere but in the heart, and that if you drive it beyond the heart you drive it out of existence; that they alone create the necessity for God to conquer them, and to decide whether he will conquer them or not; that it is an everlasting blot on creation, that God has to speak a second time to induce creatures to love him, much more that he has to constrain them by his conquering power; and yet, after all his provisions and invitations—after he has sent his Son and his Spirit to save them—after he has opened the door wide, and stands with open arms to receive them, they will still break their way to perdition, if his almighty power do not prevent; that by their own fatal obstinacy they are cast entirely upon his will; that they are wholly in his hands; that if he frown they die, if he smile they live forever. This is the grandest of all means to press them out of themselves; to cast them dead and helpless upon God; to make them die that they may be made alive. Conceal their dependence in order to make them feel their obligations! The maddest purpose that ever was conceived, unless the thing required is to be done in their own strength. If there is any truth sweeter than all the rest it is this, that we are absolutely, totally, and eternally dependent on God's sanctifying grace, and that he will have all the glory; if any view of God more supporting and encouraging than all the rest, it is that which the Christian takes, when he feelingly says, 'My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.' Take any thing else away, but take not away my God. This is the last truth that I will give up, till I yield my reason and my immortal hopes. If there is any truth in defence of which I would go on a crusade, or, better still, in support of which I would go to the stake, it is this. If you see this denial shut up heaven, and then, instead of the Holy Ghost, you see revivals carried on by human devices operating on the passions, there is more cause to mourn than rejoice."

Without wishing to bind you to any particular arrangement of subjects in your preaching, in the present interesting state of your congregation, I would advise you to mark out a plan, corresponding as nearly as may be with the operations of the Holy Spirit, in the several stages of awakening, conviction, and conversion. I believe every pastor, who has had much experience in revivals, will tell you that he has found great advantage in being somewhat systematical in bringing forward appropriate subjects. When sinners first begin to inquire, or are yet stupid, they need one class of discourses; when they are thoroughly awakened, another; and when they are beginning to indulge hope, another. The first object is to alarm them, and gain their attention; the next, is to convince them of their guilt, and desert of endless punishment; the next, to bring them to Christ as the only Saviour.

CHAPTER III.

If a happy revival should spread throughout your congregation, as I hope it may, you will have even more to do out of the pulpit than in. Though it would not be possible for you to attend all the neighborhood, and more general prayer-meetings, your approbation and advice, I take it for granted, will be sought for with reference to their frequency, their length, and the manner of conducting them, and you will

wish to be present as often as you can. Inquirers will not improbably be calling upon you almost every hour of the day. Interesting cases of awakening and conviction will require your special attention, and sometimes a great deal of it. Twenty families will want to see you in an afternoon, and will feel as if they could not be denied. You will probably be sent for in the night, as I have been, to visit persons in the greatest distress for their souls; you will have to talk with the awakened hour after hour, and day after day, till you have no more strength left; and after the utmost you can do, will feel that more than you have been able to accomplish is left undone.

As you are a frail, dying man, and there are limits beyond which you cannot go without breaking down, a great deal will depend upon the arrangements which you make to enlist the officers of your church, and other intelligent and discreet members in the work, and to lay out your own strength in the most economical manner. Though you cannot attend all the religious meetings in person, you will be able, I presume, to keep them under the direction of those in whose discretion, piety, and experience you have confidence, and who, by conversing freely with their neighbors, both in and out of the church, will be able to keep you advised of the state of things in all parts of the parish. This is a point of great importance. A pastor ought, if possible, in the height of a revival, to be made fully acquainted every day with its progress, that he may know how to preach on the sabbath, and where his other labors are most wanted.

If your time and strength would allow you to converse with each inquirer privately and often enough, either in your own study or at home, this might be the best way; but where fifty or a hundred are deeply anxious at once, it is entirely impracticable. Were you to spend every moment in this way, it would not be enough. You must resort to some plan for bringing those together, more or less frequently, who desire and need your advice. I know not how many plans have been tried for saving time, but the following are among the most common, at least in this part of the country:—Sometimes those who are awakened are requested to remain in their seats, after the congregation have retired, that they may be prayed with and addressed collectively, or conversed with individually by the pastor; sometimes they are requested to retire from the church to the lecture-room for the same purpose; sometimes the pastor, at the close of the public exercises, invites all who wish for personal conversation to come to his own house on sabbath evening. At others, when the number is large, he appoints an inquiry meeting to be held in some convenient place on Monday or Tuesday evening; and sometimes, for convenience' sake, the inquirers in different neighborhoods are invited to meet the pastor in one of their own houses. These invitations are more or less restricted, according to the judgment of different ministers. Some invite only those who are already anxious, and have made up their minds to seek salvation, let who will neglect it; while others extend the invitation to all, whether they feel any religious concern or not. Some spend the time chiefly in general exhortation and prayer, and often invite such as wish for personal conversation to stay after the meeting is closed; others address individuals personally, and ask them questions loud enough to be heard by all; while others pass round from seat to seat, spending from one to five minutes with each individual, conversing in a low whisper.

Without advising you to adopt either of these plans, to the exclusion of all the rest, I will just mention the course which I used to pursue, and which I should pursue again under similar circumstances. In the early part of the revival, and while the inquirers were but few, I met them in a way not to excite any particular observation. When the work had advanced so far that I was convinced a pretty large number would attend, I appointed an inquiry meeting from the desk, to be held on Monday evening, and continued it from week to week, as long as the revival lasted. Sabbath evening was not selected, because we commonly had preaching, and after three public services many were too much exhausted, both in body and mind, to be profited by any further instruction. Monday evening was chosen as being nearest to the sabbath; for in those days we relied more on the sabbath to advance the revival, and bring in new inquirers, than any other day of the week. My invitations were confined to those who were more or less anxious; and whatever advantage others may possibly derive from attending, I have seen more than one inquiry meeting chilled, and in my judgment spoiled, by their presence. It

makes a wonderful difference in the effect, whether the majority are deeply impressed, or but little interested, if interested at all.

My manner of conducting these meetings was, after a short prayer and a short address, to pass round and speak to each individual in a whisper, which could rarely be heard by any other person; and in this way I ascertained the feelings of from thirty to fifty persons within the hour and a-half. When the number of inquirers was much larger, I invited some ministerial brother to come and assist me. When any important thought was suggested by the answers which my questions elicited, I was in the habit of throwing it out to the meeting as briefly as possible, and then passing on. Whenever I found a case requiring special attention, I reserved it for an early interview elsewhere. Besides these general inquiry meetings, I appointed smaller ones when the state of things seemed to demand it, and found them very useful, while much time was saved which it would have cost me to go from house to house.

Much has been said within a few years past, for and against "new measures," and you will probably expect something from me on this controverted subject. My own views are, perhaps, somewhat peculiar. I neither approve of new measures as such, nor condemn them. I care not whether a measure be new or old, provided it be scriptural, and well adapted to bring sinners to repentance, and to build up the church upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." Five and twenty years ago inquiry meetings, as they are now generally conducted, and female prayer-meetings, were new measures; and I think it not unlikely, that as revivals become more frequent and powerful, other measures, which have not yet been thought of, will be adopted with great success. While, therefore, I feel constrained to express my strong disapprobation of some of the measures which have been introduced by certain "revivalists" in different parts of the country, it is not because they are new; it is because I think their direct tendency is to corrupt revivals, and fill the churches with false professors.

One of these measures is calling on sinners to rise and "commit themselves," before the whole congregation. This is done under the impression, that if you can induce a person to take such a step, he will be more likely to become a Christian than if he were left to his own meditations, and to be conversed with privately by the pastor. It may be so in some instances — and if the essence of religion consisted in pledges and external observances, a great point would certainly be gained by persuading as many as possible thus to commit themselves; but men's rising in different parts of the house to be prayed for is not repentance, and is not understood to be, either by them or the preacher. It is at most a public announcement, that they are willing to be regarded as inquirers. Now is there the slightest intimation in the New Testament, that the apostles, or other primitive preachers, ever adopted any such measure? Did they ever call upon such of their hearers as were awakened under their sermons, to rise and be prayed for as inquirers, or in any way to pledge themselves that they would attend to the gospel message? Did they not always come directly to the point, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." There is great danger, when you persuade a man who is not yet converted publicly to commit himself, that he will be induced by other than religious feelings and motives, to persevere and come into the church, and hang as a dead weight upon the cause. The pride of consistency in whatever men publicly pledge themselves to, will often carry them much further than their principles would have carried them. I am satisfied, that in general those conversions are most to be depended upon, which excite the least public observation in the process which precedes them.

Another measure, which seems to me still more objectionable, is, calling persons forward to the "anxious seats." Even if nothing more were done, than simply to invite such as are seriously impressed to come out from the congregation, and take seats specially provided for them near the pulpit, I should regard it as a measure of more than doubtful expediency. But when they are urged, and entreated, and addressed individually, and almost forced to come forward, I cannot help regarding it as unauthorized and highly exceptionable. As two venerable fathers of the Presbyterian church have,

in the appendix to Dr. Sprague's Letters on Revivals, so well expressed my own views on this important subject, I am happy to avail myself of the substance of their remarks in this communication.

"Far be it from me," says Dr. Miller, p. 37, "to pronounce a sentence of condemnation on those brethren who have thought it their duty to countenance anxious seats, or to question that good has sometimes been done, where they have been used; but the decisive question is, can this method of proceeding be considered as the best mode, nay, as a really eligible mode, of drawing to a point and ascertaining the exercises of serious inquirers? Is it the best way of testing the deliberate purpose of persons whose attention has been aroused for the first time, perhaps only a few minutes before, to the great subject of religion? It would by no means occur to me as the most judicious way in ordinary cases, of drawing the line between the careless and the truly anxious inquirer, to request all who were disposed to think seriously, to rise and present themselves before a public assembly, and this, perhaps, at the very close of the sermon, by means of which, it was hoped they had for the first time begun to feel and inquire about salvation, and of course, in a few minutes after they thus began to feel. I should expect the persons rising and presenting themselves, to be, for the most part, the forward, the sanguine, the rash, the self-confident, and the self-righteous; and that many who kept their seats would prove to be the modest, the humble, the broken-hearted.

"I know it is urged, that the awakened should be prevailed upon to 'commit themselves' as soon as possible. But suppose, after a solemn and pointed sermon, an invitation to be given to all present, who felt the importance of an immediate attention to the things which belong to their peace, to come forward and take the seats provided for them near the pulpit. Suppose two hundred to present themselves as objects of attention and prayer; and suppose at the end of three months, fifty of these to unite themselves with the church, on the ground of 'a good hope through grace'—fifty more to take the same step, not because they were satisfied of their Christian character, but because they had 'committed themselves,' and did not wish to appear fickle, or apostates: and the remaining hundred to return with greater obduracy than before to their former sinful course. Would it be, upon the whole, more favorable to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, than if, in pursuance of what are called the old measures, none but the fifty genuine converts had ever been brought forward to public view at all, and not even these, till they had had opportunity to bring their exercises to the test of time—to count the cost of the undertaking? The church indeed, in the latter case, might not grow in numbers quite so rapidly; but she would be less burdened with spurious members, and much less in danger of placing the fifty who insincerely took upon themselves the vows of Christ, and the hundred who drew back, in a state far more perilous than ever, in regard to their final salvation.

"Let it not be said, that inviting to anxious seats is the only effectual method of ascertaining who are under serious impressions and who are not. Why not invite all who are anxious to remain after the congregation is dismissed, or to meet their pastor the next evening for the purpose of disclosing their feelings, and being made the subjects of instruction and prayer? It surely affords a far better opportunity to give appropriate instruction. It prevents the mischief of dragging those into public view whose exercises are immature; and it avoids the danger, which to many, and especially to young people, may be very formidable; I mean the danger of being inflated by becoming objects of public attention, and by being forthwith addressed and announced as undoubted 'converts.'

"To anxious seats (a strange appellation) in a promiscuous congregation," says Dr. Green, p. 138, "on which the awakened and alarmed are placed by themselves to be addressed and prayed for, and to be gazed at by the whole assembly, I confess I am not friendly. I do not deny, that they may have been used without injury, perhaps with some advantage, in certain places and on particular occasions. But as a general measure, they seem to be unnecessary, and seriously objectionable. There is an ostentation about them, in an indiscriminate assemblage, which I am persuaded keeps some back who are laboring in spirit, and brings others there who feel very little; and the use of these seats has, I think, been in some places the first step to ulterior

proceedings of a very exceptionable character."

I am sensible, my dear E., that these views will be regarded by some as quite too conservative for this enlightened age; and I am not prepared to say that I would under no circumstances consent to use the "anxious seats;" but if I found public opinion in favor of them too strong to be resisted, I should think it my bounden duty to do what I could to change that opinion as soon and as fast as practicable. I am perfectly satisfied, that nearly all the congregations in New England and New York, which have been subjected to this high pressure system, have been injured by it; and there is reason to fear, that many of the churches will not recover from it for half a century to come. Dear-bought experience, however, has wrought such a change, in many places where "anxious seats" with their concomitants were once highly popular, that I believe neither ministers nor people would on any account consent to have them introduced again. The danger now is, that some will go into the opposite extreme, and discard even the safest and best means for carrying on revivals.

CHAPTER IV.

I have a few suggestions more to offer, with respect to the manner of conducting revivals. While your meetings should generally be open to everybody who can be persuaded to attend, there are some decided advantages in occasionally meeting different classes of the unconverted by themselves. You can address them with more freedom apart, and adapt your remarks better to their peculiar circumstances, than in a promiscuous assembly. It will require but very few experiments, fully to convince you of this. Some of your congregation you will find it very difficult to reach in any other way. Men in active business will be apt to excuse themselves by the plea, that your meetings and their necessary engagements often interfere. This objection you can obviate by ascertaining when they are most at leisure, and making particular appointments to suit their convenience. I shall always remember a weekly meeting of this sort, for merchants and other business men, in the city of B—, which I had the privilege of attending some twenty years ago, while assisting a respected brother in a revival. A large number met in rotation at each others' houses, and I believe a majority of them ultimately professed religion.

What are sometimes called parlor meetings for ladies have also been found highly useful in large towns like L——. Many individuals have been induced to attend such meetings, and have been savingly benefited, who could not otherwise have been brought out to hear the gospel.

During the great revival in P——, to which allusion has already been made, I held a stated meeting for some time at my own house, for the aged of my congregation, who were not professors, and I believe much good was done, which could hardly have been hoped for, had no such meeting been established.

During a revival, much more depends upon what would be called little things, than is generally supposed. Mr. N——, who understood this whole subject better than any other man I ever knew, and whose labors were wonderfully blest for fifteen years or more, till his health failed, used to advise the people at the close of his meetings to go home as still as possible—to say nothing to each other on the way about the sermon, or any thing else, but to "commune with their own hearts and be still." There was philosophy as well as religion in this advice. Many, I have no doubt, talk away religious impressions with their companions, before they get home, who might have them deepened and made permanent by silent reflection. Mr. N—— would rarely close his most solemn evening meetings with singing, because he said it was apt to divert the thoughts of inquirers from the sermon.

Never protract your meetings to a late hour in the evening. Dismiss the people in season for family and secret devotions, before they retire to rest, and so that they may retire and rise early. No part of the day is worth so much to a troubled soul as the morning, when the nerves are composed and the mind is clear.

When young friends and companions are simultaneously awakened, advise them to suspend their social intercourse till the great question is settled. They can neither help nor instruct each other. It is at best "the blind leading the blind." By conversing together and "comparing themselves among themselves," they are much more likely

to get bewildered and lose their impressions, than to find the path to heaven. I knew a case in which several young females were awakened under the same sermon, and who, instead of going home to their chambers, sat down and wept together till their alarm nearly subsided, and in a few days they were as stupid as ever. Nothing can be more unprofitable, and hardly any thing can be more dangerous, than for anxious sinners to spend much time in condoling one another. Their chief intercourse should be with their pastor and other judicious Christian friends.

The length of your several interviews with the careless and the awakened during a revival, should vary indefinitely according to the state in which you find them. Sometimes you will find it necessary to say a great deal, and at others very little; and you can never determine how much beforehand. I once called upon a very intelligent member of my congregation about eight o'clock in the morning, intending to say a few words to him about what the Lord was doing in the place, and pass on. I did not know that his mind was at all impressed, but I found him in such a peculiar state that I could not safely leave him till nearly noon. The Spirit of God was evidently beginning to strive with him, but nothing was right within or without. He was prepared to dispute every inch of ground. It seemed, at first, as if there would be no end of his cavilling. As soon as one objection was answered, or one excuse was taken away, he had another ready. He saw that he could not stand against the claims and denunciations of God's law, but he fought on the retreat, if I may so express it, like a chafed lion. It was encouraging, however, to find that every argument and appeal told upon his conscience. He yielded one position after another, till at his own request we were upon our knees at the throne of grace in his behalf. From that time his distress increased, till he found relief by unconditional submission, as he hoped, to God. Had this man been left at the end of the first or second hour, he would have felt as if he had gained the victory, and might have held out to his dying day.

Sometimes where you expected to have a hard struggle, you will find that the Spirit of the Lord has gone before you, and taken away every excuse, so that very little needs to be said. Your delightful privilege will be rather, to "stand still and see the salvation of God." In the progress of a revival, you ought to see awakened and inquiring sinners as often as once in two or three days, if possible; so as to follow up every good impression which may have been made, with suitable exhortations and advice. Many, there is reason to fear, "draw back" and perish, in consequence of being neglected too long, particularly in the critical stages of their religious concern. A lady now of very devoted piety, has often told me that when her attention was first arrested in a short visit which I made at her father's house, she has no doubt her impression would have worn off, if I had not called again the same week.

When you find an awakened sinner in great distress, the first and all-important thing is, to ascertain the true cause of his distress. If it arises from an impression that the day of grace is past, that he has committed the unpardonable sin by so long resisting the Spirit, or from any other erroneous view of his condition, he needs instruction. Distress of this sort does no good. Were it to last for a month or a year, it would leave him as far from the kingdom of heaven as it found him. Whatever relief, therefore, you can give him by correcting his mistakes, you ought most promptly and cheerfully to render. But if you find that his distress arises from genuine conviction of sin; from clear and scriptural views of the true ground of God's controversy with him—if it is the "sword of the Spirit, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, of the joints of the marrow," beware how you attempt to comfort him. Comfort is not what he needs, but a still deeper sense of his lost and guilty condition. He is yet a rebel, and "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." The Holy Spirit is striving to bring him to repentance and submission, and he is resisting with all his might. Oh, I would not in such a case attempt to take him out of God's hands, by telling him, "You must not be so much distressed; you are not so great a sinner as you imagine, you must not be discouraged; you must wait God's time," &c. &c. I would not thus thrust myself in between God and that rebel, for a thousand worlds. However great may be the agony of his mind, in view of the truth, in view of his inexcusable opposition, and of the justice of God in

his condemnation, he is still a rebel up to the moment of submission.

Your sympathies would, if indulged, lead you to sooth his troubled spirit; but you must not indulge them. It is your business, as a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, to co-operate with the Spirit, by making the truth press harder and harder upon the sinner's conscience, till he yields. A parent may entreat you to comfort his child, and tell you that you will certainly drive him to despair by dwelling upon his guilt and pressing him to immediate repentance; but this is a mistaken view of the case, unless it be, that you will make him despair of ever helping himself; and the sooner he can be driven to this, the better. Till he feels that, owing to the hardness and wickedness of his heart, there is no hope but in the mercy of God, he will not give up the contest. I believe it is a remark of President Edwards, that you never need be afraid of pressing the awakened sinner too hard, if it is a clear view of the truth which distresses him. Your finding him in great distress is no reason why you should comfort him. The time has not yet come. The consolations of the gospel are for the penitent, not for the impenitent. That he feels as if he could not live under such agony, is no reason why you should not say that which will increase it. It indicates that the hour of deliverance is at hand, and the more faithful you are, the sooner it will come.

I can truly say, that nothing rejoices me more in the midst of a revival than to find sinners in great distress; and to be able, by presenting the naked truth to their minds, to increase that distress instead of alleviating it; and I never knew any one driven to despair, under judicious treatment of this sort. On the contrary, I have seen many, under the most searching and uncompromising appeals, driven from all their false refuges in a few hours, and "brought out of darkness into marvellous light." I believe that scores are led to embrace false hopes by being soothed and encouraged too soon, where one is permanently injured by being pushed too far.

As soon as the sinner has yielded, as soon as his heart is changed, and he is a true penitent, he is prepared for the consolations of the gospel, but not before. To offer them, while he is yet unsubdued, unreconciled to God, is "healing the hurt slightly." May God give you wisdom and grace to discover the crisis, and to deal faithfully with awakened sinners, "as one who must give account." A single case of genuine conversion is worth more than a thousand hopes, hastily taken up before the stubborn will is subdued—before the heart is really changed.

Sometimes you will meet with lingering cases of concern and inquiry, which will perplex you exceedingly. After you have conversed with the individual, time after time and week after week, till you have nothing more to offer, you will see that he is making no progress. He assents to every thing you can say, and his speculative views are all correct, but there he is, without hope, and without having any reasonable ground of hope. He was one of the first to attend your inquiry meetings, and will probably be among the last, and what can you do? In general you will find, upon questioning this class of inquirers closely, that they are not so anxious as they suppose themselves to be. It is rather a morbid gloom that has settled down upon their minds, than any thing else. Some have been roused from this dreamy state by being honestly told, that it is doubtful whether they have ever had any genuine conviction of sin, and by having the alarm sounded in their ears, as if they had not yet begun to inquire. In point of fact, their situation is more critical than that of many who are yet stupid around them, and if they cannot be startled, there seems to be no hope of their coming into the light and liberty of the gospel.

If you find, as you sometimes probably will, that an awakened sinner is leaning upon you for help, when there is no help but in God, and you have told him so a hundred times, and can give him no further instruction on that point, you must stand out of the way. You must withdraw for a season, till he feels that every prop has failed; that he is in the hands of infinite holiness and justice, and that no finite power in the universe can help him. I knew a lady of this class infinitely more alarmed by being passed by in an inquiry meeting, than she had ever been by the most earnest and faithful appeals; and another, who had often been visited and had been lingering and looking to the minister for help, brought to the great decision by seeing him, when she expected he would call, repeatedly pass

the house as if he had given her up and had no hopes of her conversion. Indeed, cases like these very often occur. I remember one of thrilling interest in the college. A student who had been religiously educated was awakened, and lingered in great distress for some time. I saw him often. He was always glad to meet me, and conversed with uncommon intelligence and freedom. These interviews were continued, till he clearly saw just what he must do or perish. Still he lingered, and I became satisfied that he was leaning upon me, a worm of the dust, though he probably was not conscious of it himself. One night he sent for me in great agony of spirit, begging me to come as soon as I could, and tell him what he must do. I had seen him that very day and told him, as I had often done before. I could say no more if I went. He did not need instruction. He knew what he ought to do, but his proud heart would not bow. He wanted something to cling to. It was clear to me, that the Holy Spirit was bringing him to the point, and that human agency would rather interfere with the process, than help it forward. Instead of hastening to his room, therefore, I sent him this message, "I would visit you with all my heart, my dear young friend, but I can do you no good. You are in the hands of God, and there I leave you. What he requires is perfectly reasonable. You know it is; and he never will give up his claim. You must cast yourself unconditionally upon his mercy, through Jesus Christ, or perish." This was a great disappointment, and increased the poor young man's distress exceedingly. He felt as if he was forsaken. The last prop on which he leaned had given away, and he scarcely expected to live till morning; but ere morning came the struggle was over. He not only saw that God was on the throne, but rejoiced in it. A new song was put into his mouth, and he has long been an humble and zealous preacher of the gospel.

Be infinitely more anxious to have the work of conviction deep and thorough in the hearts of awakened sinners, and to witness the evidences of their true conversion, than to have them get hopes. The danger in most cases is, they will too soon hope they are born again. Hardly any thing is more to be dreaded than a false hope. When an individual, who has been in deep distress, tells you that the load is gone and he has new views and feelings, instead of putting him down at once as a convert, remind him that there is great danger of self-deception. Exhort him to suspend his judgment till he has time to examine himself, and faithfully to apply the tests of God's holy word. If he has really been renewed by the Holy Spirit, his living without a hope for a few days or weeks will not endanger his salvation; but encouraging him to think he is a Christian upon a superficial experience may prove his eternal undoing.

I never love to hear a minister say, in the progress of a revival, that so many have been converted already, forty, fifty, or any other definite number. "Ten were brought out last week, eight the week before, and twelve are already rejoicing this week," &c., &c. It is not given us to know the hearts of men in the most powerful revival. Multitudes hear the word with joy who are never converted. The good seed springs up, but it is in "stony places." There is "no deepness of earth, and when the sun is up it withereth." If you count all who get hopes and appear well, as the work advances, you will be sure to overrate the number. Some in whom you have much confidence, will, by and by, "fall away." At the end of three or four months after the supposed conversion of a hundred persons, you must expect to see a considerable number returning to the "beggarly elements of the world," sorely disappointing their pious friends. And is not this one reason why certain revivalists, who make the most noise in the country, are so anxious to get their converts into the church as soon as possible? Is it uncharitable to think that they want to swell the list beyond what they could any how expect to do, if they were to wait for the chaff to blow off?

If the revival embraces children, and this is not unfrequently the case, as I have no doubt that many are renewed at a very tender age; but if there is any considerable number of the children of your congregation excited to make the great inquiry, "what shall we do," I am sure that while you rejoice to see them flocking around for advice, it will occasion you a great deal of solicitude. You will find it extremely difficult to determine how much of the interest which they manifest arises from mere sympathy, and how much from the striving of the Spirit—how much they talk and ex-

hort and pray from imitation, and how much from the impulse of religious feeling. You will often be astonished at the apparent maturity of their views, and genuineness of their experience, and will probably look upon many more of them as truly converted, than really are. A few months will convince you that much of what appeared so promising was "the morning cloud and the early dew." Some however will, it is to be hoped, give increasing evidence of a real change of heart, and the question of receiving them into the church will come up at no distant day. They may wish very much to be admitted, and their friends perhaps will urge it; but I hope you will take time and look at the question in all its bearings, before you give your consent. A great many young people in some parts of the land are now in the churches, who are quite sure they never had any religion, and who exceedingly regret that they were encouraged or allowed to make a profession at so early an age. It appears to me the cases are very rare in which children should be received under fourteen; and that it is not safe to admit many till they are still older. The true way, I cannot help thinking, is to form them into a class of catechumens, under such a course of religious instruction as is best calculated to imbue their minds with the essential doctrines of the gospel; to make them acquainted with the nature and evidences of true piety, and to prepare them for admission to the Lord's table after a suitable probation. Precisely how long they should be kept in the class of catechumens, I am not prepared to say. Doubtless some may be admitted into the church earlier than others; but I think there is more danger of moving too fast than too slow

Although the probation of adults, in general, should be shorter, it seems to me, that as soon as a considerable number have signified a desire to join the church, it is the duty of the pastor to meet them weekly or oftener, for a considerable length of time, for the express purpose of explaining to them the articles of faith, the nature and obligations of the covenant, and for carefully going over the whole ground of Christian experience, that they may act with a full understanding of what they believe and promise when they make a public profession. You will remember, that after the great revival of 1827, in your junior year, this course was adopted, and it is one which I have always felt it my duty to pursue, both before I came here and since.

I have no time to enlarge, and am sure that if I had I could not do full justice to the subject of revivals. It is a great subject. It is an exceedingly difficult subject; and I rejoice to refer you to much better instruction and advice than I can give you. President Edwards has treated it with great discrimination and ability. Next to the Bible, I recommend to you the study of his invaluable narrative of the wonderful work of God in America a century ago. Dr. Sprague's Lectures are well worth your perusal; and the appendix, consisting of about twenty letters from distinguished ministers of different denominations, you should not fail to have on your table for daily reference. A volume entitled, The Great Awakening, by Rev. Joseph Tracy, and lately published in Boston, I would likewise warmly recommend to your notice. It is a condensed compilation of great value, and every pastor in the land ought to possess it. That you may be greatly assisted by such helps as you can obtain, and above all, that you may be taught of God, and made eminently wise and successful in winning souls to Christ, is the prayer of, &c.

IV.—AN APPEAL ON CHERISHING REVIVALS.

BY THE REV. DR. BROWNLEE, OF NEW YORK.

Dear brethren, we must, in pursuing measures for the conversion of the world, show the Spirit of our Master, by faithfully cherishing evangelical revivals of religion; and these we must labor by all divine means to bring about, not only in all our churches, but in all our colleges.

We live in times of remarkable outpourings of the Holy Ghost. God has set the visible seal of his approbation on gospel revivals, in the numerous conversions of precious souls, and the edifying and comforting of the body of Christ. "It is the doing of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes." Let us "give the Lord no rest," until by one general outpouring of the Holy Spirit he cover the whole land with his glory. And there are two mighty considerations

urging every Christian to promote gospel revivals on the most extensive scale: We thereby speed the glorious chariot of his salvation over the nations of the world—this is one; the other is this: Crowds of gifted, pious young men are brought out of the world to the obedience and service of God.

Now, the duty we owe, dear brethren, to our divine Master in view of this is to seek out, with impartial and discriminating care, the most devoted and gifted of the young men, who have been brought in during "these times of refreshing from the Lord," and presenting them to the church, we must urge upon all the duty and necessity of bringing them forward to the service of Christ in the holy ministry; and knowing the great value of native converts to be ministers to their own kindred, let us seek to extend the church's patronage as well to those who have been converted in pagan lands, as to those who have been born in Sion at home.

And hence, dear brethren, it is one of the most solemn duties incumbent on us, to yield a steady and efficient support to Education Societies, and to our Theological Seminaries. These invaluable institutions, the ornaments of our Christian country, will always flourish in proportion as holy religion flourishes in the churches; and to the nurseries and "schools of the prophets," does every Christian look for laborers, when with most painful interest he thinks of the wide "fields, ripening and white, even to harvest;" and when the affecting cry of Macedonia comes, borne on the four winds of heaven, upon his distressed ear, "Come over and help us!"

Let us all come with longing desires to the throne of grace in prayer for one long-continued, universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit in all the churches! Then will the dry bones in the valley of vision be quickened into a living and mighty host! Then shall there be no lack of pious and devoted servants, imbued with the true missionary spirit, to go forth into all lands for the conversion of the world! and we have all had experience enough, dear brethren, to be fully satisfied, that unity is strength in the household of faith, as well as in the body politic. Hence we ought anxiously to employ every proper means of bringing God's children in various religious denominations closer together in the unity of love, in the purity of doctrine, and the common faith; that, seeing eye to eye in the things of God, we may all happily be brought to combine our influence, and all our means and resources, in one harmonious and mighty effort to convert the world.

And in all these efforts, if we have the Spirit of our Master in us, there will be this characteristic—whatever we have to do must be done quickly! Tens of thousands are perishing around us, and throughout the world, while we, alas! in the spirit of the world, in indolence, and love of gain, are moving as slowly on as if no danger were incurred by our sloth!

And there is one peculiar trait in every truly Christian effort and sacrifice for the conversion of the world, which bears prominently the image of the Master's Spirit on it. It is this:

We shall move on in the path of duty without waiting for any one; we must form the distinct purpose in our own hearts, each one for himself, of doing all we possibly can do personally. The gallant soldier, who engages in the conflict, fights not for his own regiment's honor, but for his country, and he presses on personally, as if the whole issue of the battle, and the fate of his country, were to be decided by his single arm; so must we act. We must each one of us act as earnestly and as faithfully in our own place, as if the whole of the work were to be achieved by us single-handed; and this must not proceed from a denominational zeal merely; nor from a temporary impulse of excited feelings. Let it be the result of a holy principle of conviction; let this pervade our own breasts, and let it be carefully impressed on every one around us. There can be no united, successful effort for the conversion of the world, until each individual, and each church, and each denomination in the great Christian community, shall press onward, each in their own place, in the work, as if their own personal exertion were, singlehanded, to consummate the whole! Let us set our face, therefore, against the cold calculations, and the lukewarm movements of the man who waits for his neighbor to move first in the business, and who, when he does move, seems to be impelled by the breath of human applause only, or the glory of his own sect. Let us, dear brethren, shun his paralyzing presence—far from us be this spirit. He wants the soul and spirit of missionary en

terprise; he is dead to the holy impulse of zeal for the glory of God, and the cause of humanity; he has not our Master's Spirit in him!

V.—PASTORAL QUALIFICATIONS.

BY THE REV. H. HUMPHREY, D. D., PASTOR OF AMHERST COLLEGE, U. S.

THE first qualification which I shall mention is sincere and elevated piety. However men of evangelical views and principles may differ on some other points, they can have but one opinion here. Piety is the life and soul of pastoral fidelity. Without it every duty must be forced and heavy, if not positively irksome; for how can a pastor form any just estimate of the worth of the souls committed to his charge, if he has never deeply realized the value of his own? If the "love of Christ does not constrain him," what can hold him up and bear him on, through evil report as well as good report, in the discharge of his duty? What else but eminent piety can sustain him, under the trials and discouragements which await him? What shall arouse him to action, when neither honor nor profit invites, and when "flesh and blood" shrink back—when all worldly motives conspire to discourage and impede him? If the love of God does not glow in his bosom, if an ardent love of souls is not there, what shall counteract the sluggishness of his own fallen nature, and induce him to follow his very enemies with prayers and entreaties to the mouth of the pit into which they are plunging?

Every pastor must be with the families of his flock in sickness, danger, and affliction. He must stand by the bedside, when flesh and heart are failing, when earth is receding, and the awful portals of eternity are opening; he must accompany many a trembling pilgrim to the entrance of the dark valley, and as it were go down and dip his own feet in Jordan, while the dying, who cling to him, are torn from his side, and sink in the cold flood. And how, if the standard of his piety is low and doubtful, can he be to them a ministering angel? How can he, with becoming earnestness, recommend to them a Saviour to whom he is himself all but a stranger, and point them to a heaven, which it requires a great stretch of charity to hope he will ever reach? How poorly, how miserably qualified is such a pastor to visit "the widows and the fatherless in their affliction, and to comfort mourners in Zion."

Let me earnestly exhort you, my dear son, to "examine yourself;" to aim at a high standard of piety; to rest satisfied with no present attainments; to remember that your people look up to you not only for counsel, but for large Christian experience; and that without this experience you cannot discharge your duties with comfort to yourself, or advantage to them.

In the second place, a deep and thorough knowledge of human nature is essential to eminent usefulness in the pastoral office. Whatever a man's talents, or education, or piety even may be, he will do but little good, and often a great deal of hurt in pastoral intercourse, if he is destitute of common sense, which is only another name for a knowledge of men and things, as they will be found in every congregation. However pure his notions may be, and whatever pains he may take to do good, he will often utterly fail for want of the right tact. He will interest himself in things with which a minister ought never to meddle, he will say things which he ought never to say, and remain silent when he ought to speak; he will be constantly mortified to find that he has gone to work in the wrong way, and instead of gaining an influence with all classes in his congregation, he will create a general distrust of his judgment, and everybody will soon feel that he has mistaken his calling. Like a stranger in a dark night, who hits every post that may happen to be in his way, and wounds himself continually with the sharp corners of things, he gets into trouble at every turn, and hardly ever knows how to get out.

The volume which you have to study is a very large one; some pages and chapters of it are hard to decipher; and it would take you more than one life fully to master it. Still, you may learn a great deal in a short time by diligent application, and you want this knowledge for immediate and daily use. You must acquire it early, or you will find it impossible to go on; for, although every candid person will make some allowances at first, all will expect you to be an apt scholar, and if you disappoint them here, you will soon lose your influence, however well you may preach. It would be scarcely hyperbolical to say, that your congregation is a world in minia

ture. It consists of the aged and the middle-aged, of youth and children, of the rich and the poor, of the learned and the ignorant, of the friends of God and of his enemies. It is certain, that you will have all the subtleties of human nature—all its wayward propensities—all its passions and appetites to deal with. How much wisdom, then, do you need! what an intimate knowledge of the windings of the human heart, to discharge aright your thousand duties!

Another essential pastoral qualification is prudence. Understand me; by prudence, I do not mean that time-serving, earth-born policy, which is careful never to disquiet men's consciences; which is so very polite and civil as never to use the word hell, without an humble apology, or to name the prince of darkness, without transforming him into a harmless eastern metaphor. Nor by prudence, do I mean that cringing spirit which never dares to look titled wickedness in the face; that aspen timidity which always says "yes" to the world, whatever it may dictate or propose, and which never troubles the gay, the rich, the great, or the polite, with any of the unwelcome and old-fashioned topics of religion; or at any rate, not till they are just leaving the world, and want to be assured that such harmless and good-hearted people as they are have nothing to fear. All this and more, which in some quarters passes current under the imposing garb of prudence, deserves a very different epithet.

Genuine ministerial prudence keeps back no important truth—listens to no compromise with sinners—connives at no fashionable vice—cringes before no lordly worldling—is never silent when it ought to speak—and never sits quaking in cowardly concealment when the honor of religion calls for boldness and activity. But prudence is always the opposite of rashness and inconsideration. It neither speaks nor rests, till it has had time to think. In rebuking transgression, it strives to conciliate and gain over the offender. It disarms prejudice, inspires confidence, increases the number of friends, and wards off the attacks of enemies. Ordinary talents, under the direction of prudence, will do more in the ministry than the greatest gifts without it. Indeed, without prudence, no pastor can long be either useful or happy. But I must not dwell any longer here.

In entering upon the "Pastoral care," the first thing is to become acquainted with your flock. Let me advise you to take up the matter in earnest, and in a systematic way. I know it is an arduous undertaking. It will cost much time, which you will find it difficult to command just now, when your weekly preparations for the pulpit require you to be almost every day in your study; but you should "know the state of your flock" as soon as practicable. Till you do, you cannot adapt your preaching to their wants. You can preach the truth every sabbath day to be sure, and so can any stranger who happens to come into your pulpit; but this is shooting at random. No two congregations probably require the same course of preaching at any given time. What is exactly suited to the circumstances of one might be very inappropriate to the condition of another. And how are you to find out what your people most need? As but few of them will call on you at first, it can be done only by visiting their families; and when you have once entered upon the task, you will not find it so arduous, nor that it takes you off from your studies, as you may anticipate. You will commonly find, by dinner time, that you need the remainder of the day either for relaxation, or for a change of employment; and you will often be rested in the afternoon and evening, by making those friendly calls, which people love to receive so soon as they can from their new pastor.

When you begin, take a memorandum along with you in your side-pocket. Inquire after all the members of the family, and speak a few words at least to every one you find in the house, as well in the kitchen as the parlor. Put down the names and the number of the children. If any thing uncommon arrests your attention, note it down for reference, and for inquiry or action, as the case may be. If you adopt the course which I have recommended, and ever show me your book, I shall expect to find memoranda of this sort:—"A. B., in such a poor family, is a remarkable boy. I must keep my eye on him. If here is a gem, as I think there is, it must be picked out of the rubbish and polished."

"D. N. appears to be pious, but to need instruction upon essential points. I must call again soon."

"I have seen a family to-day extremely poor, deplorably ignorant, and I am afraid vicious. The father never attends church, though nominally with us, and the children have never been in a sabbath school in their lives. Something must be done at once. Such heathenism is a disgrace to a Christian community."

"There is an aged widow in a garret, in such a street, waiting to be called home. I found her in my visits to-day, and it made my heart ache. Why is she there? or at any rate, why is she not made more comfortable? I find she is a member of our church. Her case must be immediately attended to."

"I have been greatly refreshed to-day in conversation with an invalid in humble circumstances. Such patience, such humility, such faith, such consolations, such a hope! Oh! it was good to be there, and I shall esteem it a great privilege to go often."

"D. A. is intelligent, and accomplished, and extremely friendly; but opposed to evangelical religion. He has been under bad influences, and has prejudices which must, if possible, be removed. The case demands prayer and effort."

I hope your first pastoral note-book will abound with such memoranda, whether I ever have the pleasure of looking it over or not. As your congregation is rather large, it may take you six months or more to visit every family; and when you commence you will be apt, under the pressure of nameless other calls and duties, to be discouraged; but if you go by system, "redeeming the time," doing a little to-day and a little to-morrow, and if you persevere from week to week, and month to month, you will get round sooner than you expect; and when you have completed this parochial census, you will not only be much better prepared to instruct and watch over your flock, but will feel yourself more than compensated for all your toil. When I settled in P——, where there had been a most unhappy division for seven years, and the two societies were just reunited, I spent the greater part of the first year in making myself as thoroughly acquainted as I could with nearly the whole population, and I found the advantage of it at every step. It is true I was not a young man. I had spent ten years in another field of labor, and could of course command more time without endangering my public performances than you can. You will find no very serious difficulty, however, provided your health is good, in adopting and carrying out the plan which I have recommended; and having once gone over the whole ground, and taken all the important bearings and altitudes of things, you will feel a satisfaction and a confidence in your subsequent labors which no other beginning could impart. Those pastors (I hope there are but few such) who let the first year pass, and perhaps the second, without visiting all the families of their respective charges, lose vastly more in comfort and usefulness than they are commonly aware of.

VI.—THE PASTOR IN THE SICK-ROOM

FROM THE GERMAN OF CHRISTIAN OEMLER, PASTOR AT WEIMAR.*

CHAPTER I.

AN ADDRESS TO UNCONVERTED PATIENTS.

My dear friend! God has laid you on this bed of sickness. Do not think that this has happened by chance. God, the all-wise ruler of our destinies, has the wisest and most salutary designs in afflicting us. What is every dispensation of this kind? Is it not a summons of God to us mortals to render an account of our life? What does he say to every sick person? Give an account of thy stewardship! Give an account of the life thou hast led! Can you deny our obligation to do this? Yea, Lord, we know that we are mortal; we know that we have no continuing city here; we know that we must render a strict account of our life; we know that what we sow here we shall reap hereafter; that it is appointed unto man once to die, and after death the judgment; that we must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil; this—all this we do know; but, O Lord, how seldom do we think of rendering this account! Sometimes we suppose death to be very remote from us; sometimes we imagine God will not call us to a strict accoun; sometimes we delay this great, important, solemn concern from

* Translated by the Rev. Albert Helffenstein, sen

period to period. Thus are we at length deceived into a most lamentable security. Does not our own experience prove to us that such is our case?

But what does God, the Father of mercies—the God who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance—what does he do? He permits disease to invade our bodies, and prostrate us on beds of sickness, that he may withdraw us from the bustle of the world into the solitude of the sick-chamber; affording us the opportunity to reflect whether we are prepared to exchange this world for the one to come; urging us to place the account of our life before us, and to reflect seriously whether we shall be able to stand in his presence. Ah! my friend, the Lord is now calling upon you to render an account. This account is replete with the numerous mercies which you have received at the hand of God, from your infancy unto the present moment. If we should attempt to enumerate them, we would find them numberless. Here are the many and various opportunities of doing good in the world—of glorifying God, and reflecting honor upon our most holy religion; here are the numerous ways which God had chosen to reach your heart; the many calls to repentance and reformation; the many expressions of goodness in the course of his providence, intended to draw you to him. Now, permit me to inquire, have you employed these numberless mercies in the service of your Maker? Have you devoted your youth, yea, all the days of your life, to the honor of your glorious Creator? Have you loved the Lord, your kind benefactor, supremely? What does conscience reply to this investigation? Will it not pass sentence against you? Reflect for a moment. To whom has your youth been devoted? Was it not the world? And where is the good you have done? where the glory which you have given to God? What sins does conscience now accuse you of having committed? Can you, therefore, remain at ease? or should you not be alive to your duty, and settle your account with God now, that he may turn away his anger, and lift upon you the light of his reconciled countenance? Delay not, I beseech you, this important concern one moment longer. You know not how long you may live, or how long a time you may have the use of your understanding. Follow, therefore, this advice, which is given with no other view than to promote your everlasting welfare. Be thankful that you are yet alive, and that you have been visited with this affliction. Look upon it as an evidence of divine goodness, intended to secure your salvation. Humble yourself before God, and pray with fervor and sincerity of soul, that he may open to you the deep depravity of your heart; pray, that he may show you the odious character of sin, and the enormity of your transgressions; pray, that in view of your sins he may enable you to exercise a godly sorrow; pray, that he may grant you a well-grounded confidence in his mercy, trusting that he is not willing you shall perish; pray for faith in the Redeemer, believing that he came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost, appealing to his atonement on the cross, and looking for the pardon of your sins, and reconciliation to God, through his meritorious sufferings and death; but pray also, that God by his grace may awaken in you the resolution not only never to sin against him in future, but also to devote the residue of your days entirely to his service. Oh! come, unite with me in devout prayer before his throne of grace.

Thanks be unto thee, O God, Father and Lord of my life, that I am yet permitted to occupy a place in the land of the living. How often mightest thou have arrested me in my sins, in my ingratitude, in my insensibility, and suddenly extinguished the lamp of life! Righteous Father, I confess that I never was prepared to stand before thy judgment-seat and render the final account of my life! How my heart trembles when I remember the astonishing danger in which I lived so much at my ease! But thanks be unto thee, that now thou hast awakened me to a sense of my danger! that thou art urging me to escape! that thou art calling on me to render an account in the present probationary state! I am affrighted at my abuse of all thy mercies; I am affrighted in view of all my sins. Omniscient God, I would not deny one! Hear my confession: I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am ashamed of myself, and of my ingratitude. Oh! that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for my transgressions! But blessed be thy name, I know that thou hast no pleasure in the death of a sinner; I am persuaded that

thou also hast loved me in Christ thy Son. I fly to thy mercy; I fly to Christ the Saviour of the world; I embrace him who is the propitiation for our sins. Be merciful to me a sinner! Pardon all my sins, and save me for Christ's sake. Amen.

SECOND ADDRESS.

I hope you have reflected seriously on the subject of our first conversation. If you have examined your past life sincerely and impartially, as in the presence of God, your own conscience will convince you of the necessity of humbling yourself before God, while you will stand self-condemned in his presence. But remember, the human heart is by nature so deceitful, that attentively as we may examine it, we cannot fully search it out. God, therefore, requires of those who would obtain an interest in his mercy to be sincere, that they may not flatter nor deceive themselves, nor endeavor to cloak their sins. Hence, like David, they will pray for an upright heart. "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Thus will you be disposed to pray, my dear friend, if your conversion to God is sincere. In no case is deception more dangerous than in this momentous concern. In the eternal world this deception cannot be corrected. If our eyes should not be opened until eternity shall have sealed our doom, it will be too late to think of retracing our steps, and turning to God. Therefore, my dear friend, be thankful that God has added another day to your existence, and so improve it that you may work out your salvation. Go to the throne of grace, and pray that God may disclose to you all your sins—your most secret sins—even the sins which you no more remember. Collect now your thoughts, and reflect sincerely on the whole of your past life, and your own conscience will charge you with sins at which you will be alarmed. Their number and magnitude will be distressing. You will be grieved for having known the will of God, and yet not having done it; you will be grieved in view of the transgressions which you have committed; you will be grieved on account of your ingratitude towards your heavenly Benefactor, for his numerous and great mercies; you will be grieved for the insensibility and security in which you have lived. Ah! how valuable will grace, even the grace of God be to you! and how earnestly will you seek, and how diligently will you improve it to the salvation of your soul! How grateful will you feel that God is still good, and merciful, and gracious! Your sick-bed will be to you a most instructive school of wisdom. How sincerely, how humbly will you confess your sins to God! How great, how sensible will the anguish of your heart be, in consideration of all your transgressions! With what sincerity will you seek the pardoning mercy of our God. How sweet will those words of life be to you, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners!" Oh! how precious will Christ crucified, his meritorious sufferings and death, be to you! How humbly will you believe in his name! and with what anxious solicitude will you appropriate to yourself the blessing of his salvation! Yes; then will you form the sincere, firm, and unalterable determination to submit to God unconditionally, and to devote the residue of your life to his service. Will you not say, these are my resolutions?

ANOTHER ADDRESS.

What should be our chief concern? An important question, which I now would recommend to your serious consideration on your sick-bed. I will endeavor to answer it for you briefly. It should be our chief concern to obtain the assurance that we are in a state of grace. This assurance is as consoling as it is necessary. Ah! what advantage to us is life—long as we may live, well supplied as we may be with every temporal good, enviable as we may conceive our earthly condition—if God, the righteous and holy God, should be our enemy, our fearful, terrible Judge! Oh! then, would we not be the most miserable, wretched beings on earth? Would it not be better if we never had been born? for it is indeed terrible to fall into the hands of God as our incensed Judge. It then should be to us at all times, but particularly on a sick bed, a subject of deep concern and anxious solicitude to be reconciled to God, that we may contemplate him as our Father, and view ourselves as his children. If God be our Father, then have we obtained the forgiveness of our sins, are the adopted heirs of his kingdom, and interested in all the

blessings of salvation by Jesus Christ. Then is death to us no longer a messenger of terror, but a peaceful guide, sent to conduct us into the exalted mansions of everlasting rest.

Now, suffer me to inquire, Are you in a state of grace? are you a child of God? I perceive you cannot venture to answer these important questions in the affirmative; but if you should flatter yourself with the impression that you are a child of God, then remember, that whosoever can lay claim to this privilege, endeavors to do the will of his heavenly Father continually, sincerely, willingly, and with real delight. What does conscience say to this? Have you never offended God? Have you always obeyed the law of God? Have you never knowingly and wilfully committed sin? Permit conscience to speak while you endeavor to recollect all the thoughts which have occupied your mind, all the words which you have uttered, and all the actions which you have done. Do they all correspond with the law of God? Can you venture to say this? Oh, friend! your own conscience will urge you to confess that you have often sinned against God, by transgressing his laws. If so, then acknowledge in the presence of God the conviction of your conscience. Consider you have to do with that God who can see into the innermost recesses of the soul; before whom all things are naked and open, and from whom nothing can be concealed; who has heard all the sinful words you have spoken; who knows all the secret evil desires you have cherished in your heart; who is acquainted with all the ways in which you have walked; who has observed all the actions which you have done through life. Can you, then, flatter yourself with the hope that you are in a state of grace? Can you even imagine that you are a child of God? Must you not on the contrary confess that you have been his enemy, and have abused his grace? This surely should be to you an alarming consideration! If you but realize that you are on the verge of eternity, and that in a few more moments you may appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, what must be your emotions, seeing you have no assurance of an interest in his mercy, who can seal your destiny forever. Oh! reflect seriously on this all-important subject.

Will you not acknowledge that it should be your chief concern to be admitted into a state of grace? that God may be your father, and you the child of his love? Do you ask, What must I do to be admitted into a state of grace, that God may be my father and friend? I answer, you must first acknowledge and confess your sins before God. This he requires in his own word: "Acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy." Consider, moreover, that your sins are offences against the best of fathers, and the kindest of benefactors; and let this consideration fill your heart with anguish and sorrow. Oh, yield obediently to the influences of saving grace, that God may accomplish his benevolent purpose with respect to you. Be astonished at the infinite love of God, and at the boundless compassion of our Redeemer, and behold in that love your only ground of hope that God has no pleasure in your death, and in this compassion the precious assurance that Christ has purchased grace and salvation also for you. Pray for the Holy Spirit to open your eyes, that you may see and know how willing he is to impart his grace likewise to you. Ah! think of the sufferings of Jesus. How deep was his humiliation! How fearful and severe his trials and temptations! How indescribably great his anguish and pain, especially in the memorable garden, and on the shameful cross! And while you think of these things, you will also think of looking up to him in faith that you may mourn over your sins, have your guilt blotted out, and be clothed with his righteousness. Thus will you stand before God as his adopted son, and be esteemed as the object of his loving-kindness and tender mercy. Pray for this saving faith. Having obtained this mercy, let it be your constant purpose and persevering effort, so long as God may be pleased to spare you in this land of probation, to cherish and cultivate his love and friendship. Hence you will see the necessity of watching over the most secret desires of your soul, in order to ascertain whether they agree with the will of God; loving whatsoever he loveth, and hating whatsoever he hateth. This will lead you to pray, "Lord, teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good; lead me in the land of uprightness." But pray, also, that you may be

more conformed to the example of Christ, remembering, that in proportion to the resemblance we bear to the image of Christ, is the evidence strong, that we are the children of God, and the heirs of eternal life.

ANOTHER ADDRESS.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has made a most solemn declaration in the passage, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." In these words, the qualifications of those who desire to be saved are plainly designated. They imply sincere, genuine repentance; but in what does this repentance consist? In a mere desire to be saved? In a cold, heartless wish not to have sinned? Is it sufficient if I should say on my sick-bed, I believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to reconcile me to God; I know that God is merciful; and if I say, "God be merciful unto me a sinner," I shall be saved for Christ's sake? or does not true repentance also imply a radical change of heart, and thorough reformation of life? The true Christian, who is acquainted with the nature of repentance, has more enlightened views on this important subject. He knows that he only who confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy; that there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared; that faith without works is dead; that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; that nothing which is unclean can enter into the kingdom of heaven. How evident then it is, that repentance and faith, without which there is no access to divine mercy on the sick-bed, does not consist in a mere desire to be saved, or in an inconsiderate recourse to the merits of Christ; but with these acts exercised in their purity, are also connected a radical change of heart, and thorough reformation of life.

My dear friend! As it hath pleased the Lord to call you to repentance by this present sickness, it becomes you to take this dispensation, together with these truths, into serious consideration. I know you do not deny that you are a sinner; I know that you are not indifferent to the voice of your conscience, while it is urging you to this acknowledgment; I know that you feel distressed in view of your sins, and that you are disposed to fly for refuge to the grace of God and the merits of Christ. But whence comes the anguish of your soul? From fear of death? Suppose your health had been preserved, would you have thought of your sins, and been sorrowful. Ah! my friend, if your present sickness, or the apprehension of death, be the cause of your sorrow, your repentance is not genuine. The true cause of your sorrow should be founded in having offended the God of love, and slighted Christ's precious redemption; therefore, examine the cause of your sorrow, that you may not be deceived. I know that Christ and his merits are valuable in your estimation; but does the love of Jesus constrain you to hate sin, to renounce every evil practice, and to devote your life to his service? Does the grace of God teach you to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts? and is it your intention to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world? My dear friend, answer these questions as in the presence of God! We know from sad experience, that many, having escaped from their sick-bed, have returned to their former habits, and walked in their sinful ways. Thus, by this conduct, they exhibited the mournful evidences that their repentance was not sincere. I, indeed, am not acquainted with your heart; God alone knows it; but should you deceive man, you also deceive yourself, and this deception might be to you the cause of everlasting sorrow. I therefore beseech you, as you value the mercy of God, to take this matter into serious consideration. True repentance implies an entire change of heart, and a thorough reformation of life. The man who is really converted abhors all sins, and feels an ardent desire to devote himself entirely to the service of God, and the promotion of the Redeemer's cause. Therefore, I again say, examine yourself impartially, that you may ascertain your sincerity before God, and the genuine character of your convictions; and rest not satisfied short of the real, substantial, permanent, and undeniable evidences of that conversion which the Saviour requires, knowing that they who thus seek God sincerely in his own appointed way, shall find him to be in their own experience the God of their salvation.

the house as if he had given her up and had no hopes of her conversion. Indeed, cases like these very often occur. I remember one of thrilling interest in the college. A student who had been religiously educated was awakened, and lingered in great distress for some time. I saw him often. He was always glad to meet me, and conversed with uncommon intelligence and freedom. These interviews were continued, till he clearly saw just what he must do or perish. Still he lingered, and I became satisfied that he was leaning upon me, a worm of the dust, though he probably was not conscious of it himself. One night he sent for me in great agony of spirit, begging me to come as soon as I could, and tell him what he must do. I had seen him that very day and told him, as I had often done before. I could say no more if I went. He did not need instruction. He knew what he ought to do, but his proud heart would not bow. He wanted something to cling to. It was clear to me, that the Holy Spirit was bringing him to the point, and that human agency would rather interfere with the process, than help it forward. Instead of hastening to his room, therefore, I sent him this message, "I would visit you with all my heart, my dear young friend, but I can do you no good. You are in the hands of God, and there I leave you. What he requires is perfectly reasonable. You know it is; and he never will give up his claim. You must cast yourself unconditionally upon his mercy, through Jesus Christ, or perish." This was a great disappointment, and increased the poor young man's distress exceedingly. He felt as if he was forsaken. The last prop on which he leaned had given away, and he scarcely expected to live till morning; but ere morning came the struggle was over. He not only saw that God was on the throne, but rejoiced in it. A new song was put into his mouth, and he has long been an humble and zealous preacher of the gospel.

Be infinitely more anxious to have the work of conviction deep and thorough in the hearts of awakened sinners, and to witness the evidences of their true conversion, than to have them get hopes. The danger in most cases is, they will too soon hope they are born again. Hardly any thing is more to be dreaded than a false hope. When an individual, who has been in deep distress, tells you that the load is gone and he has new views and feelings, instead of putting him down at once as a convert, remind him that there is great danger of self-deception. Exhort him to suspend his judgment till he has time to examine himself, and faithfully to apply the tests of God's holy word. If he has really been renewed by the Holy Spirit, his living without a hope for a few days or weeks will not endanger his salvation; but encouraging him to think he is a Christian upon a superficial experience may prove his eternal undoing.

I never love to hear a minister say, in the progress of a revival, that so many have been converted already, forty, fifty, or any other definite number. "Ten were brought out last week, eight the week before, and twelve are already rejoicing this week," &c., &c. It is not given us to know the hearts of men in the most powerful revival. Multitudes hear the word with joy who are never converted. The good seed springs up, but it is in "stony places." There is "no deepness of earth, and when the sun is up it withereth." If you count all who get hopes and appear well, as the work advances, you will be sure to overrate the number. Some in whom you have much confidence, will, by and by, "fall away." At the end of three or four months after the supposed conversion of a hundred persons, you must expect to see a considerable number returning to the "beggarly elements of the world," sorely disappointing their pious friends. And is not this one reason why certain revivalists, who make the most noise in the country, are so anxious to get their converts into the church as soon as possible? Is it uncharitable to think that they want to swell the list beyond what they could any how expect to do, if they were to wait for the chaff to blow off?

If the revival embraces children, and this is not unfrequently the case, as I have no doubt that many are renewed at a very tender age; but if there is any considerable number of the children of your congregation excited to make the great inquiry, "what shall we do," I am sure that while you rejoice to see them flocking around for advice, it will occasion you a great deal of solicitude. You will find it extremely difficult to determine how much of the interest which they manifest arises from mere sympathy, and how much from the striving of the Spirit—how much they talk and ex-

hort and pray from imitation, and how much from the impulse of religious feeling. You will often be astonished at the apparent maturity of their views, and genuineness of their experience, and will probably look upon many more of them as truly converted, than really are. A few months will convince you that much of what appeared so promising was "the morning cloud and the early dew." Some however will, it is to be hoped, give increasing evidence of a real change of heart, and the question of receiving them into the church will come up at no distant day. They may wish very much to be admitted, and their friends perhaps will urge it; but I hope you will take time and look at the question in all its bearings, before you give your consent. A great many young people in some parts of the land are now in the churches, who are quite sure they never had any religion, and who exceedingly regret that they were encouraged or allowed to make a profession at so early an age. It appears to me the cases are very rare in which children should be received under fourteen; and that it is not safe to admit many till they are still older. The true way, I cannot help thinking, is to form them into a class of catechumens, under such a course of religious instruction as is best calculated to imbue their minds with the essential doctrines of the gospel; to make them acquainted with the nature and evidences of true piety, and to prepare them for admission to the Lord's table after a suitable probation. Precisely how long they should be kept in the class of catechumens, I am not prepared to say. Doubtless some may be admitted into the church earlier than others; but I think there is more danger of moving too fast than too slow

Although the probation of adults, in general, should be shorter, it seems to me, that as soon as a considerable number have signified a desire to join the church, it is the duty of the pastor to meet them weekly or oftener, for a considerable length of time, for the express purpose of explaining to them the articles of faith, the nature and obligations of the covenant, and for carefully going over the whole ground of Christian experience, that they may act with a full understanding of what they believe and promise when they make a public profession. You will remember, that after the great revival of 1827, in your junior year, this course was adopted, and it is one which I have always felt it my duty to pursue, both before I came here and since.

I have no time to enlarge, and am sure that if I had I could not do full justice to the subject of revivals. It is a great subject. It is an exceedingly difficult subject; and I rejoice to refer you to much better instruction and advice than I can give you. President Edwards has treated it with great discrimination and ability. Next to the Bible, I recommend to you the study of his invaluable narrative of the wonderful work of God in America a century ago. Dr. Sprague's Lectures are well worth your perusal; and the appendix, consisting of about twenty letters from distinguished ministers of different denominations, you should not fail to have on your table for daily reference. A volume entitled, The Great Awakening, by Rev. Joseph Tracy, and lately published in Boston, I would likewise warmly recommend to your notice. It is a condensed compilation of great value, and every pastor in the land ought to possess it. That you may be greatly assisted by such helps as you can obtain, and above all, that you may be taught of God, and made eminently wise and successful in winning souls to Christ, is the prayer of, &c.

IV.—AN APPEAL ON CHERISHING REVIVALS.

BY THE REV. DR. BROWNLEE, OF NEW YORK.

Dear brethren, we must, in pursuing measures for the conversion of the world, show the Spirit of our Master, by faithfully cherishing evangelical revivals of religion; and these we must labor by all divine means to bring about, not only in all our churches, but in all our colleges.

We live in times of remarkable outpourings of the Holy Ghost. God has set the visible seal of his approbation on gospel revivals, in the numerous conversions of precious souls, and the edifying and comforting of the body of Christ. "It is the doing of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes." Let us "give the Lord no rest," until by one general outpouring of the Holy Spirit he cover the whole land with his glory. And there are two mighty considerations

rupted me—called his wife and children around his bed, extending his hand, while the children fell upon his neck. He begged my pardon for having offended me, with evident signs of the keenest sorrow. Now, he expressed a desire to be reconciled. Having investigated his motives for this reconciliation, I found them to be sincere and correct; as he thanked God that he had not taken him away in his impenitence, prayed most humbly for the pardon of his sins, and sought forgiving mercy, in Christ the Saviour. Subsequently I administered to him the holy supper. In the preparatory service, he confessed his sins in deep contrition, and shed tears of gratitude before God for this great mercy. He survived this event some days longer, while grace carried on its purifying process, and rendered him still more capable of spiritual enjoyments—until at length he closed his life to the edification of those who witnessed his dying moments. Let everlasting thanks be ascribed unto our God, who is so rich in grace and mercy.

Case III.—A certain member of our church became sick. I was called, and found him exceedingly uneasy; for his conscience most bitterly accused him. As soon as he beheld me he wept, and exclaimed: Ah, that I never had offended my God and Saviour! Here he was dissolved in tears. My dear son, I inquired, by what kind of sin have you so greatly offended God? Ah, said he, I was apprentice to an opulent master, who had two dissipated sons. They from time to time purloined much of their father's money. While they were asleep I usually withdrew some of this money, supposing it was no sin to take what they spent in so licentious a manner. The sum amounts to perhaps sixteen or twenty dollars. But now, alas! now, this sin torments me! Oh! I am lost! Subsequently, when my master employed me as his salesman, I was in the habit of defrauding him, by retaining part of the proceeds of the sales. Am I not a thief? And can a thief enter into the kingdom of God? Ah, I am lost!

Most certainly, I replied, you have committed sin; for you have intentionally deprived your master of what belonged not to you. And God has forbidden all kinds of fraud and theft. Yes, yes, said he, I now, alas, see and acknowledge that I have done wrong, and I am very sorry, and much distressed. Assist me that I may procure relief from this terrible fear and distress. Ah, how shall I obtain peace before I die?

The following conversation then took place. Do you sincerely confess your sin? Ah, God knows how sincerely. But do you acknowledge it with abhorrence? Oh, I denounce this sin! I am frightened whenever my conscience reminds me of it. I could wish I never had committed it. But why do you consider this sin so odious? Have I not offended God, forfeited his friendship, and violated my conscience? And should I have died in this sin, would I not have been lost? Oh, how thankful I am to God that I yet live, and that he has borne me with so much patience. Do you believe that Christ the Saviour has also atoned for this sin? Yes, surely this is my faith; for having suffered for all sins, this must likewise be included. Now, then, reflect on the words: "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy." To obtain mercy, and to have our sins pardoned, and not imputed to us, imply the same ideas. You then have the assurance from God himself, that he will be merciful unto you, and for Christ's sake pardon this sin. Ah, God be praised for what mine ears have heard! He then will also pardon this sin? Certainly; but—Ah, I anticipate what you are going to add. Behold, here I deliver into your hands twenty-four dollars, which you will put into the possession of my master after my death. Now I am satisfied. Thanks be unto thee, best of Fathers, for this mercy! As he was visited with a protracted disease, I frequently called to see him; but he on many occasions lamented this sin; so that I often was obliged to administer consolation. But at length he closed his life much to our edification. Some time after this, I transmitted to his master the money, requesting him to return me his receipt. But I carefully concealed his name, lest I might afford occasion for uncharitable remarks after his departure.

Case IV.—I was called to a lady of rank who was also a member of our church. She was entirely devoted to vanity. The days of her life she gave to the world. She was either in the theatre, or engaged in giving or receiving visits; and whenever she was an hour alone, she filled it up either by reading a comedy or some other work of fancy. Before her sickness, I had frequent conversations with

her on the vanities of this world ; but they made no impressions whatever, as her heart and her house were filled with the world. She became dangerously sick. I was called. When I stepped into her chamber she wept aloud, and seemed to be almost overwhelmed with despair. As soon as she saw me she cried : Is there grace for me ? will God have mercy on such a one as I am ? How came you to entertain such thoughts, my dear friend ? Can you find no more comfort in the world ? Why do you not invite your gay company, to cheer your drooping spirits ? Can you derive no peace of mind from reading lively comedies, and fine moral essays ? Ah, do not increase my uneasiness. I now, alas ! see how guilty I am. When I remember how many hours I have spent in decorating my person ; while, alas, I never thought of the true ornament of the soul ! Although sometimes the thought would flit across my mind, yet I made every effort immediately to banish it ; when I remember that I have spent so much time in the theatre ; so much in reading such books as can now afford me no comfort ; so much in company and at the card-table ; when I remember that I have not had the Bible in my hand for so many years, conscious that I should have blushed had any one found me reading this holy book ; when I remember that I have educated my daughters with all diligence, that they might shine in the world and all its vanities ; when I remember that God has received so small a portion of my life ; I am ashamed of myself, and tremble. Ah, away with my vanity ! O that I could recall the precious hours of my past life, I would devote them all to my glorious Creator. Oh, now I am convinced of the truth, which you so often commended ; religion, above all things in this world, is the most important. Oh, that I had followed your advice ! Will God have mercy on me ? My dear friend, I scarcely know what I shall say ; for I am apprehensive that you are not sincere. A lady possessing a cultivated mind, and refined taste, has become alarmed. She searches the Bible, which she neither read herself, nor suffered her family and children to read. Proceed, humble me deeply ; for I deserve it. I am pleased with your candor in telling me the truth. My folly is truly disgusting. I confess openly, that I nowhere find peace, but in the Bible. It acquaints me with the depravity of my nature, which I now so sensibly feel ; it shows me my condemnation ; but it also directs me to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus our Saviour. Why, my dear friend, I hear quite unexpected truths. Why do you no longer appeal to the uprightness of your heart. This was formerly with you a favorite phrase. It is desirable that you now should remind me of it. O poor creature that I am ! Where is the uprightness of my heart ? This is altogether impossible unless it is connected with Christian experience. Only the true friend of God and the devoted disciple of Jesus, possesses uprightness of heart. Oh, I am destitute of this. What good have I done ? Where are my virtues ? In what respect have I glorified God ? Oh thou great and kind Benefactor, where is the honor and love which thou requirest of me ! O blessed Saviour, where is my devotedness to thee ! Do you now perceive that nothing is so well calculated to console your troubled duty, as this incomparable truth ; " This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief ?" Yes, to my own shame and confusion, I must confess ; " among whom I am the chief," the most worthless ! I again say that my folly is most disgusting. Vain creature that I am ! And yet I was so high-minded and proud, that I despised all true Christians. But may you not apply to yourself the other truth, " This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners ?" Ah, not yet as I ought ! Will God receive such a vain woman, whose whole time was occupied with playing, and dancing, and light reading, and dressing ; while God and her salvation seldom arrested her thoughts ? and who by her vanity gave so much offence to others ? Ah ! God ! — Here she wrung her hands and wept aloud. Her husband just then stepped in and found her in this agitation. Ah, my dearest, do not suppose that you will die. Are you certain of this ? And although I should not die at present, shall I pursue the same course of life ? Shall God, our kind benefactor, receive no portion of our existence ? Ah, I entreat you, my dear, let us, with our house, commence serving the Lord. Otherwise we disgrace ourselves below the reptile, that honors its Creator. Grant me

this last request, and leave me entirely alone. Ah, Lord, I have much yet to do, for I have a difficult journey before me! True, but only the real friend of God and disciple of Christ successfully finishes this journey; only he, with whose conscience the Spirit of God bears witness, that he is godly and pious, and a subject of the Spirit's indwelling. Ah, then I cannot finish my course safely, for I am as yet destitute of this witness. Then, endeavor to obtain it. But is this possible? Certainly, for you are yet in the land of the living. This is an evidence that you may yet obtain this good testimony. But you must begin the work in sincerity, and with zeal. Now I will leave you to yourself. Pray God for the grace of true conversion. Such prayer is acceptable to him, seeing he is not willing that any should perish. Here I took leave, and commended her to the grace of God.

Early the next day she sent for me. When I came she addressed me in the following manner. I have wrestled the whole night with God before I could be convinced that I might hope for mercy. But, thank God, I now am persuaded that he has no pleasure in my destruction. I know, too, that Christ died for me also. But whether I shall really enjoy this mercy is another question. Now, my dear friend, it depends on you to seek, sincerely to seek his mercy. Ah, I do seek it sincerely, God knows my heart, and is acquainted with all my desires. He knows that I am truly sorrowful for all my sins. As often as I reflect on the vanity of my past life, I tremble, and am ashamed of myself. Oh, I thank God that he has not taken me away in my sinful career; but has permitted me to live to the present moment. I seek his grace alone through Christ the Saviour. And I hope that God for Christ's sake will have compassion and receive me in mercy. The remaining hours that may be added to my life, I will devote to him. I will endeavor to edify my whole house. And should God restore me again to health, my whole future life shall be sanctified to his service. God is witness to the sincerity of my purpose; for I do assure you that I am disgusted with vanity. Here she again wept aloud.

My dear friend, said I, now I can safely declare that you may cherish the full hope of mercy, and look for the pardon of all your sins. God himself says, Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy. Ah, Lord, thou knowest that I confess them before thee with the strongest abhorrence of my soul! You then are truly heavy-laden; indeed very heavy, with the burden of your sins. Then listen to the kind and inviting voice of Jesus the Saviour; Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest—ye shall find rest unto your souls. Ah, thank God, then I will go to the cross of my dearest Redeemer. He surely will receive me. He gave his own precious life. Oh, let not thy painful death be in vain to me. He, even he himself said, "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no-wise cast out." You are in the right way; thus you most assuredly will obtain mercy. Do you now wish to read something for your instruction and comfort? With all my heart. Then read the valedictory address of our Saviour to his disciples from the 13th to the 17th chapter of St. John's Gospel. Here I departed, commending her to the grace of God.

At the dawn of the following morning she again sent for me. I found her altogether disconsolate. "Ah!" said she, "all comfort is gone. My conscience tells me that the Saviour is ashamed of me. I was ashamed of him and have often denied him. Oh! terrible words, 'He that denieth me before men, I will deny before my Father which is in heaven.' Suppose I should now die, what would be the consequence if my Saviour should deny me?" "That you are disconsolate, my dear friend, is not to me a matter of surprise. These reverses are necessary for you. Thank God that it is so. It is his design to bring your sins prominently up to your view, that they may appear to you truly odious, and that your resolution to forsake them may be strengthened." "Alas! but if I perish at last. Surely never. God never can have an ill design in his own ways. They must inevitably work together for good. Well, then, I will persevere in obedience; I deserve to be truly humbled and chastened. Father, my dear Father, I have merited it!" I then entreated her not to be terrified if in future such dark hours of temptation should arrive; but immediately resort to the precious promises of God, and without any further delay apply them to her trembling conscience. "I will follow your ad

vice.' I particularly endeavored to illustrate this divine procedure by the example of David, who had been infatuated by vanity, but whom God led through severe trials, that he might not again be influenced by the world. "It is well God then deals thus with me for my welfare." "Yea, surely. In all his ways, God designs the promotion of our happiness. He has pursued this course with you, that on the one hand he might draw you from the world to himself, and on the other, that he might establish you in the determination to devote your future life exclusively to his service." Here her mind was satisfied. I subsequently on all occasions found her contented. In a short time, too, her health was restored; and, blessed be God, she was made instrumental in the conversion of both her husband and children. She became an example to the whole town; and many a vain lady was reproved by her exemplary life. Whenever she beheld the vanities of the world, she seemed to be distressed, and said, "Oh! that my poor fellow-mortals would meditate on the great end of their existence, and remember the momentous hour of death. Thank God, I have realized the truth, that the 'world passeth away, and the lust thereof.' No, no; the enjoyment of divine approbation, the pursuit of Christian virtue, and the prospect of dying a happy death, shall be my chief concern in this transitory world."

THE PASTOR IN THE SICK-ROOM.

CHAPTER III.

INSTRUCTION AND CONSOLATION TO THE PIOUS.

But the children of God sometimes have great fears on their sick-bed; for the farther they have progressed in the divine life, the more tender does their conscience become, and the stronger is the sense of their infirmities and short-comings. The more tenderly they love God and their Redeemer, the more sensibly will they be grieved in view of their imperfections. Such dejected and sorrowful friends of God, the pastor should treat with much sympathy and kindness. Therefore, he should so regulate his instruction as,

1. To represent that even the most faithful children of God, and devoted friends of Christ, are subject to many infirmities and imperfections, while they remain in this present imperfect state of being; that they therefore have reason to pray daily for the pardon of their trespasses; knowing that Christ has graciously promised them forgiveness.

2. In order to afford them encouragement they may be reminded of the faults and infirmities of Christ's disciples, and other friends of God, such as Moses, David, Peter, and yet with what patience they were borne of God and their Saviour.

3. Let him particularly call their attention to the unbounded mercy and grace of God, and the great design of Christ's redemption. Let him refer to the passages in which God is represented conversing as a tender father with his mourning children. "Is Ephraim my dear son, is he a pleasant child," &c., Jer. xxxi. 20. "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me," Isaiah xlix. 14. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, &c. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed," &c., Isaiah liv. 7, 10. "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine," Isaiah xliii. 1. "A bruised reed," &c., Isaiah xlii. 3. "God so loved the world," &c., John iii. 16.—Rom. viii. 31, 34; 1 John i. 8, 9, ii. 1, 2; 1 Tim. i. 15, 16; Heb. iv. 15, 16. Oh, how precious will the Saviour be to such souls, who with his perfect righteousness covers all their imperfections and faults! Oh, how will they endeavor to have their robes made white in the blood of the Redeemer, and to be purified from all their imperfections!

4. Should the disease increase, the pastor may select those passages in which God assures his children of his peculiar love and providential care, such as, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. "For I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand," &c., Isaiah xli. 13, 14. "He giveth power to the faint," &c., Isaiah xl. 29, 31. "Delight thyself also in the Lord," &c., Psalm xxxvii. 4, 5. In like manner, passages in relation to the immortality of the soul and eternal life, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word," &c., John v. 24. "My sheep hear my voice," &c., John x. 27, 29. "I am the resurrection and the life," &c., John xi. 25, 26. "Blessed are the dead," &c., Rev. xiv. 13.

5. The weaker the pious patient becomes

and the nearer he approaches his dissolution, the less the pastor should speak; encouraging him only by short ejaculations, and affecting stanzas from such hymns as relate to our union with God and the Redeemer. He should describe the great happiness of God's children with animation and feeling. Thus will the faithful pastor stand by and sustain him with his advice to the last moments of his life. And he will thank God when he is privileged to witness the latter end of the righteous.

(2.) Many truly pious and converted souls are often troubled when they see that they are about leaving a poor widow and destitute orphans. In what manner they should be treated we have shown. In addition to this such souls may be reminded of the consoling promises, Gen. xvi. 17, 19; Ps. lxviii. 5, 6; Isaiah lix. 14, 15; Jer. xxxi. 20; Heb. xiii. 5; Matt. vi. 31, 34. But I will state a few cases which have occurred to me. I have visited some truly pious and faithful children of God on their sick-bed, who suffered great anxiety of mind. The cause of this anxiety and fear was founded in the anticipation of the agony and pain which they perhaps must endure in the last moments of their life. They declared to me, that they were assured of the pardon of their sins, and the hope of eternal life. They moreover were anxious to depart and be with Christ. But when they reflected on the sufferings which they perhaps must endure at their latter end, they became exceedingly uneasy, and sometimes wept aloud. Such persons the pastor must treat with much kindness, and endeavor in various ways to encourage and comfort them. I will state the manner in which I have treated them.

1. I said, we will take for granted that you must pass through considerable sufferings before you arrive in the glorious city of the living God. Is not the Saviour worthy of all we may yet suffer in his service, seeing his love to us was so great? Does he not deserve that we should endure some adversity for him, who suffered and died under so much pain and anguish? Should not we as his disciples be willing to be like him, by passing through suffering into his glory? Should we not cheerfully bear our cross and follow him? Should we not be ready to say, Though he should slay me yet will I trust in him? Besides, is not heaven worth some suffering? Is not the great glory and the exalted rest beyond the grave, the anticipation of which affords us so much delight, is it not such as that we might disregard any suffering however great, which we might be called to endure? Does not a weary and exhausted traveller rejoice when he approaches within sight of the place of his destination? Will he tremble if he must toil a few moments longer? Oh! the view of his city whither he is hastening sweetens all his sufferings. And what are all the sufferings of time? Are they to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed?

2. I observe that it was uncertain whether they should suffer much pain in their latter moments; that I had witnessed many children of God departing with great joy. Therefore they should submit the termination of their life to the gracious government and disposal of God, who certainly would choose whatever is best and most salutary for them. In the mean time I illustrated the examples of the pious Simeon, Luke ii. 29, 30, and Stephen, Acts vii. 55, 59.

3. Finally, I encouraged them to trust in the Redeemer. Rest assured that the faithful Saviour, the best friend of souls, whose help is so much needed in the last hour of life, will not forsake his people. What kind of friend would he be, who had accompanied us faithfully in our journey, but in the time of the greatest peril, when we are in special need of aid, would depart from us? And can this be supposed of Jesus the Saviour?

(3.) I have had patients among those who are converted that doubted the genuineness of their conversion because they have had no opportunity to manifest their faith by their works. They therefore became exceedingly perplexed and troubled. Here,

1. Let the pastor show, how necessary it is to evince the genuineness of our faith by good works, seeing that without these works faith is dead.

2. That in the short period that is yet allotted to them, they can afford credible evidences of a real change of mind, and true conversion to God; as they still have sufficient opportunities to do good in the world by their conversation and conduct. They may contemplate the residue of their life as a great mercy, and so improve it that it may become a blessing. They may

feel and manifest great delight in acts of devotion, feeling pleasure in meditating on the word of God, and in fervent prayer, finding ardent desires for a more intimate communion with God, and increasing their knowledge of divine things. They may wish that they were able to recall their former life, so as to employ it to a better purpose. They may glorify God on their sick-bed, by their patience and resignation, and express their warm gratitude for the time and opportunity he has granted them for repentance. They may devoutly pray for others, supplicating God to preserve them from the way of perdition and to reclaim those who have gone astray. They may exhort those who approach them to godliness and piety, and thus become preachers of righteousness. When therefore these patients connect with their trust in the merits of Christ, such zealous endeavors to serve him, they satisfactorily evince that their faith is genuine, and that they have the opportunity of doing much good during the brief time they may yet have to live.

3. That in our repentance and consequent reformation God principally regards the sincerity of the heart. In these circumstances God will look upon the sincere wish to do good, to glorify his name, and to practise Christian virtue, as having performed the deed. Let however the pastor exhort them not by any means to neglect doing good in thought, word, and deed, during this short period. Is the patient a father? how much good may he still do by exhorting his children! Is he a husband? what an impressive preacher of righteousness may he be to his wife! And how many approach his bed, to whom he may communicate instruction; while he may send for those whom he had offended by his former life, and by his pious example remove the offence.

4. Let him exhort them to fervent prayer, that God may make them the instruments of his grace on their sick-bed; and afford them the opportunity of redeeming in some measure what they formerly had neglected. Although the pastor may not be authorized to encourage the patient to expect the same amount of glory, for which the long-established and active Christian is privileged to hope; yet he cannot deny them a proportionate interest in the gracious reward. There is a sufficiency of mercy and blessedness for every pardoned sinner. "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live and not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed shall not be mentioned unto him," Ezek. xviii. 21, 22. There is a sufficiency of blessedness in being privileged to rejoice; "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy." It is mercy sufficient if he attains but the lowest grade of happiness.

(4.) Often the pastor meets with patients who are very fearful that they may sink under the weight of much pain, seeing their faith is so new and so weak, in consequence of which they may become impatient, and lose their faith. Such souls should be reminded,

1. That they have already seen, known, and often confessed, that the change which they have experienced is the work of God. They, therefore, should not look to their own strength, but trust in the almighty power of God. He who has commenced the good work of conversion in them will also finish it. Hence he is called their Saviour, the author and finisher of their faith, Heb. xii. 2.

2. They should adhere steadfastly to the promises of God. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee," Jer. liv. 10; xxxi. 20. Here the God of truth promises all his children his efficient aid. Let the pastor particularly refer to the important passage in 1 Pet. i. 5: "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." For afflictions are intended to try, establish, and strengthen their faith. Our kind and affectionate Father in heaven can never forsake his children.

3. Finally, they should look to Jesus as their great high priest, sitting at the right hand of God, advocating their cause, and interceding for them, Rom. viii. 34. Such representations will strengthen their confidence in God, and administer peace to their mind.

4. I have also availed myself of this advantage with much success: I constantly endea

vored to encourage them with the assurance that they should by no means eventually perish. As they love God, all things must work together for their good. By this representation, I succeeded in comforting a distinguished friend. As the physical constitution of his body was such as to render it very susceptible, the least pain made him timid, and deprived him of courage; but God strengthened him with his promises.

(5.) Often the pastor has patients who are suffering great pain. Such sorrowful persons, bowed down under a keen sense of their sufferings, are not so much in need of instruction requiring close attention and persevering reflection, as they are in need of consolation and encouragement. Hence the pastor will succeed best,

1. By encouraging them to elevate their views above themselves, and their present momentary sufferings. Let him invite them to contemplate the innumerable mercies which the Most High has bestowed, is every moment bestowing, and in the future glory of the eternal world will bestow upon them, so sure as Jesus Christ lives and reigns forever. Let him incite them to praise God, particularly for the mercies with which he in his kind providence has surrounded their beds, not only administering to their temporal comfort through the instrumentality of others, but also affording them spiritual nourishment and strength. Let him encourage them to suffer like Christians, that they may honor God, and glorify his name. This may be done most effectually by turning their attention on the one hand to their own creation. How fearfully and wonderfully has the Lord made them! Psalm cxxxix. 14–18. Oh! how happy is their lot, that instead of remaining in their former nothingness they are made living souls, which have been brought to the knowledge of Christ, and shall see God in his glory, and love him together with all the saints forever. What materials does this consideration afford to praise God, and to endure with patience the sufferings of time! On the other hand, they will find motives to praise God, by contemplating the various ways in which God has led them from their early youth unto the present time. They were all good, all selected with the view of conducting them from the way of sinners into the path which leads to God, and prepares and qualifies the soul for his enjoyment.

2. By reminding them how often the Lord has extricated them from the most difficult and trying circumstances of life, in which human counsel was inefficient, and their destruction seemed inevitable. Hence they might conclude that they will not now be forsaken. They, therefore, should put their trust in their heavenly Father, believing that he will extend his helping hand, and relieve them from their present trouble; for thy faithfulness is as unchangeable, O God! as thou art. Thou canst not recall the repeated promises which thou hast made to thy people; thou wilt sustain thine own honor, and show thyself their covenant God, their father, and their friend, seeing they confide in thy help, and fix their tearful eye alone upon thee.

3. That the afflictions which have befallen them in his kind and merciful providence are not punishments, or messengers of displeasure, but kind, parental chastisements, and necessary trials of their faith. Here let the pastor again encourage them to praise God, their Redeemer, for the sufferings he endured, and the death he died, that they might be reconciled to God. Now they are Christ's. Whomsoever he loves, the Father cannot hate; and whatever belongs to him, the Father cannot reject. What a source of comfort! Though I should be forgotten and forsaken by the world on this bed of affliction, yet thou wilt not forget me, for I am engraven on the palms of my Saviour's hands.

4. Let him convince them that the welfare of their soul requires this suffering. They suffer as the members of Christ; and as the Lord knows that their deeply-rooted infirmities cannot be removed in any other way, he employs this painful remedy. Here is an additional motive to exercise patience. God, our benign Father, knows best how to prepare his children for the enjoyment of everlasting felicity. Oh! then, proceed in humbling me, thou divine Physician of my soul! Make me poor! Reduce my strength by sickness and pain, that my redeemed soul may be wholly united to thee.

5. Let him show, that as the followers of Christ they are obliged to endure all things, even the greatest sufferings. How much the Saviour endured to accomplish their redemption! They, however, may rest assured he will not impose more upon them than they are able to bear. Soon they

shall be enabled to triumph with their Saviour. "It is finished."

6. Finally, let him remind them of the limited sufferings of time compared with the unbounded enjoyments of eternity. What are the afflictions of the righteous? They are light and momentary, working out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Ah! when I groan under intense pain, and sigh for comfort, may heaven open and show my exalted Saviour on his throne of glory—may I discover what I shortly shall be in company with thee! Yea, when the terrors of death approach, stand by me, thou Conqueror of death—draw nigh and say, "I live, and thou also shalt live." Then no tribulation, nor distress, nor pain shall separate me from thee; then will I conquer, most assuredly triumph, and be blessed forever. What divine comfort! What sweet composure, even in the severest suffering! The Lord shall deliver me from all evil, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom.

6. When the pastor is called to patients whose end is approaching, but who are truly converted, and therefore depart in faith, two cases are possible: either they are in the full possession of their mind, so that they understand and feel what is said; or this is not the case. If they have the full possession of their mind, the pastor should,

1. Encourage them to praise God for having been thus far gracious to their souls; for the refreshings of his grace on their sick-bed; for not permitting Satan to sift them; for having preserved their understanding, and brought them safely so near to the close of their life, and the enjoyment of everlasting felicity. Here let him engage with them in a suitable and fervent prayer of thanksgiving.

2. Incite them to the exercise of a triumphant faith, founded on the mercy of God and the merits of Christ, by which all our spiritual enemies are overcome.

3. To be constantly engaged with Jesus, the faithful Saviour. To this end, Christ on the cross, and in his great glory, may be exhibited. Here the pastor will not be at a loss for materials to speak impressively.

4. Dwell on the exquisite happiness and glory of the future world, where they soon will arrive. The better the pastor himself is acquainted with the city of the living God, and the oftener he has penetrated into it by faith, the more animated and affecting will be his words. Oh! that all the servants of God may have seen, tasted, and felt the glory that awaits those that believe in Jesus; that on such occasions no lame and cold address may be heard!

5. Join with them in short ejaculations for grace to overcome. These should be brief, animated, and affecting—with frequent pauses—in mild accents—such as, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labor, and their works do follow them." "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." "Verily I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise." "Mountains shall depart, and hills shall be removed, but the covenant of my peace," &c. "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!" "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." "I desire to depart, and be with Christ." "None of us liveth to himself; whether we live, we live unto the Lord."

Let the pastor in particular select those passages of holy writ, and stanzas of hymns, which edified and affected the patient during his sickness. I have had patients who requested me to repeat in their last moments some particular passage or verse which they designated; and such requests the pastor will faithfully observe.

6. Finally, let the pastor, together with those who are present, bow the knee, and engage in devout and fervent prayer to God.

Here I feel constrained to add a very important remark: Experience has taught me the great injury which families may cause their dying relatives in their expiring moments. A mother forcibly snatched her dying child from the bed, in consequence of which the little one struggled a whole day with convulsions, so that at length the mother willingly cast herself upon her knees with me, and most earnestly besought the Almighty to deliver the child from its agony. A wife rushed upon her husband, laid hold of him, and shook him repeatedly, that he might revive. She accomplished her purpose; but the consequence was painful. Such was the state into which he was thrown, that it required four strong men to hold him, while we were subjected to much anxiety and distress before he expired. An affectionate daughter, seeing her pious father about to die, pressed his hands, cast herself upon his face, kissed him and wept aloud. He recovered, looked mournfully at her, and assumed a warning countenance. The consequence was a conflict for many hours. I therefore do entreat all young pastors to manifest their benevolence by attending to these circumstances. When they are called to the sick who are approaching their latter end, let them carefully prevent them from being disturbed in their expiring moments. Let them endeavor to keep the relatives from the bed, and exhort them to the duty of prayer, that God may soon deliver them from the pains of death.

VII.—ON GENERAL PASTORAL VISITATION.

BY THE REV. P. DODDRIDGE, D. D.

Look upon this as a considerable part of your pastoral work. It obliges your people; it gives you an opportunity of serving them, not only by your private discourse, but, by letting you into their circumstances, you may be the more capable of making a proper application to them in public.

Endeavor to get proper information as to the state of your congregation and church. For this purpose, when you come to a place, take a catalogue of the names of the persons that subscribe, statedly attend, church members, and the poor. Make it a rule to see each of them at their own houses. Let two or three of the most judicious be chosen, with a view of getting information with regard to the characters of the rest; entreat them, moreover, to inspect the behavior of their brethren and friends, and to inform you of such things as, upon the whole, they think you ought to know. This, however, will not be necessary, if you have any persons solemnly set apart by the congregation for this purpose, which to me appears a rational and scriptural thing. Have proper times of meeting with the persons appointed to this work, to talk over church affairs; and always conclude your conference with prayer. Every Monday before the sacrament will be a very proper time for this business. Consult with them before you propose any to communion. Do not despise flying stories: either they have a foundation, or they have not; if they have, they ought to be regarded, if not, care should be taken to remove the reproach, and fix it on those who raised it. At the same time, however, do not be too ready to believe them. A general caution may be grounded on a flying story.

Make a pastoral visit to each family, at least once a year. In this visit talk to the master and mistress of the family. Renew a solemn charge to them to take a religious care of their family. Then inquire into the state and character of their children and servants. Set down the names of both, in the first pastoral visit you make, and alter the list as occasion may require. If you have an opportunity, talk with the several members of the family. At a proper time charge upon them a due regard to their eternal concerns, especially the tender branches of the family. Proper addresses, weekly or monthly, to the members of your own family, will fit you for the regular discharge of your duty on this head.

After you return make some memorandums how you find things, and keep a catalogue of cases, disposed under different particulars. This book must be kept secret. Let no one in the world see it. Make it unintelligible to every one but yourself. Let there be one catalogue of those who appear unconverted; another, of those under serious impressions; another, of those who seem of hopeful disposition; another

of those who are proper to bring into communion when occasion offers; and another, of those who have generally acted very well, but in some instances need to be admonished and censured. On your day of fasting and prayer, which may be about once a quarter, look over this book, and see what is necessary to be done for the service of religion among your people.

In your occasional visits, call frequently upon persons of great importance in your congregation, especially if you live near them; but endeavor to proportion your visits not merely to the external circumstances of the family, but to the opportunities of usefulness. Visit frequently those under any extraordinary affliction, and those in whose circumstances there has lately been any peculiar change.

In all your visits take a great deal of notice of children. Give them texts to learn, and little rewards for learning them. This will often furnish matter for good discourse, and will engage the affections of children, which may be of importance to your future life, and their eternal welfare. Some children will listen to a minister who will not regard a parent.

In all your visits remember to behave like a minister, grave and serious; though sometimes pleasant, yet never be too much elevated with mirth. Take heed at entertainments not to be very much charmed with any thing you eat or drink; be pleased with all, but do not indulge too nice a palate. Drop some serious hints; and take care, if you have a convenient opportunity, to conclude with prayer.

Be very careful that you retire in time, and do not outstay the spirit of conversation, nor spend so much of your time in visiting as to lead people to suppose that your time hangs heavy upon your hands. A loitering, idling, tattling minister is a contemptible character. Rather appear properly full of business; and let it not be mere affectation. Every hour will be well filled up if you attend strictly to the various duties of your office.

When several of your congregation meet at a private house, be amongst them if convenient, partly with a view to regulate their hours, and to oblige them with your company. You may also have an opportunity of making conversation useful. By all means spend some time in prayer before you separate.

Engage your people sometimes to visit you; and always on these occasions entertain them with a prudent hospitality, but never affect grand entertainments. Set apart one day in the week to attend to those who wish to come to you upon spiritual accounts. Talk seriously and tenderly to such, and pray with them at large. Recommend their peculiar cases to the divine regard in the most affectionate manner. This will have a tendency to make you experimental preachers.

VIII.—ON CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION, SABBATH SCHOOLS, AND BIBLE CLASSES

BY THE REV. H. HUMPHREY, D. D.

Always bear it in mind, that more than one half of your flock are under twenty years of age, and that the tenderest care of a shepherd is to gather and feed the lambs. It is your duty, and if you discharge it faithfully, it will be your greatest pleasure, to superintend the religious education of the children and youth of your pastoral charge. While you are preaching to them as part of the congregation from Sabbath to Sabbath, and sometimes writing sermons on purpose for them, much more will remain to be done. The children must be brought nearer, and addressed in a more familiar style, than they can ordinarily be from the pulpit. The truth must be presented in its more simple and elementary forms. You must gather the little ones about you, and break up the bread of life into small portions, as they can receive it.

In the first place, then, let me charge you to catechize them. This you may do both on the Sabbath and on week days, and I would advise you to do it systematically. Whatever method you adopt, form your plan, and announce it from the pulpit. Let your people understand that it is your intention to meet the children statedly, at such times and places as you specify, and that you rely upon the co-operation of parents to aid you in securing their punctual attendance. I would recommend neighborhood catechizing, because it will sometimes be inconvenient and even impossible for all the children to come together in one place, and they ought none of them to lose the

benefit of this exercise; but you should by all means have set times for catechizing them together on the Sabbath. I confess I feel a great partiality for the sanctuary, as the most proper place. Perhaps it is because when I was pastor I was in the habit of bringing the children for the same purpose into the body pews, several times in a year, after the regular services of the Lord's day. I know not how much of mere feeling there may have been in it, but there was always to me a sacredness in the associations of the place, which added much to the interest and solemnity of the exercise. There I had baptized many of them in the name of the Holy Trinity; there they were accustomed to listen to me from the pulpit; and there most of the parents would remain in the side pews to hear what I had to say. This last circumstance gave me a fine opportunity of saying many things to fathers and mothers through their children, which I could scarcely have said with equal advantage elsewhere. If this hint should strike you favorably, I hope that wherever you collect the children of your congregation to catechize them, you will induce as many of their parents to attend as you can. Generally make the exercise short, or rather contrive to make it so interesting, that the time may seem much shorter than it really is; this will make both parents and children anxious to come again.

If children are catechized, they must have catechisms selected for them, and must commit them to memory. Quite young children want something more simple than those who are a few years older; but I think the fault of the present age is to simplify too much, or at any rate to confine the child too long to the mere elements of things. The order of nature is to advance, to expand, to "leave the things that are behind," and "go on unto perfection." As yours is a Presbyterian church, I take it for granted you will use the Assembly's Shorter Catechism for the older children, whatever more simple questions and answers you may select for the younger. This catechism is an incomparable summary of "sound doctrine;" and the objection that children cannot understand it, will weigh but little with any one who believes that their memories ought to be early stored with clear statements and accurate definitions. No theory of early religious education can be more erroneous, than that which would withhold from children every thing which cannot at the time be perfectly understood. I might confidently appeal to the experience of all who have enjoyed the advantages of early religious instruction, and profited most by it, that much which the child cannot fully comprehend furnishes, by being laid up in his memory, the richest materials for intellectual and moral improvement in after life

I must be allowed to add, that very much will depend upon the manner in which you conduct your catechetical exercises. Were you to content yourself with asking the naked questions as they occur in their order, and receiving the answers, however correctly committed by the children, you would but very imperfectly discharge your duty. Almost any one of them might take the catechism and do the same. You are their pastor; their religious guide and teacher. To you they have been taught to look for instruction. Their bright eyes are upon you; their little ears are open; their young hearts are tender. You ought, therefore, to prepare yourself thoroughly for the exercise; to enter into it with all your heart; to ask a hundred questions growing out of the lesson; to explain, to simplify, to illustrate; and in one word, to pour in as much truth as can be profitably received. In this way you will keep up a most interesting acquaintance with the rising hopes of your congregation; will gain the love and confidence of your infant charge; and will be able to sow much precious seed, which, by divine refreshing, may spring up and bring forth, "some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold."

In the next place, let the sabbath-school receive a large share of your pastoral attention. I know you cannot take it upon your own shoulders; it will not be expected; the burden would be too heavy. You cannot be a regular teacher, nor the immediate and responsible superintendent; your public labors on the Sabbath will not ordinarily leave you either time or strength for the service; but you must do a great deal in one way and another, or your school will not prosper. You must, unless you are more highly favored than most pastors are, be the life and soul of it, or it will have but little efficiency; you must prepare the machinery, and move the wheels, if you do not perform the work. I hope you hav

some first-rate men in your church with whom you can advise, and who will be ready to second you in all your plans and efforts; but they will look to you to move first. It is best they should. There must be a central power somewhere; there must be a head. The duty properly devolves upon the pastor to take the lead, and he must not decline it. In order to bring the importance of sabbath-school instruction before the whole congregation, you must preach on the subject. You must point out its advantages; you must urge upon those who are competent, and who may be applied to as teachers, the duty of enlisting in the great and good work; and exhort parents of every class to send their children seasonably and steadily. You must, with the best advice you can obtain, select the teachers, and secure as many consistent, well-informed, and devoted Christians as possible. If a sufficient number of professing Christians, competent to the task, cannot be found, then others of sober minds and unblemished morals must be enlisted; but I hardly need to add, that no individual should ever be applied to, or received as a teacher, whose moral character is at all doubtful.

Though you cannot take charge of the school yourself, you can meet the teachers once a month, or oftener, to hear their reports, to ask their opinions upon the merits and defects of text books, and the best methods of instruction; to discuss and answer questions, and to give them familiar lectures upon such topics as you judge will be most interesting and profitable.

Let me earnestly advise you also, to meet the teachers every week, when it is practicable, and go over the lesson with them carefully before it is recited. This will give them opportunity to hear your explanations and practical remarks, to propose their difficulties, if they have any, and will be a better safe-guard than any other, against erroneous expositions of scripture, and those discrepancies of instruction which are liable to creep into the best-regulated school. I do not know how you can spend an hour in the week to better advantage. If the teacher alone were to be instructed and benefited by it, no good pastor would grudge the time or the trouble. How much less, when you consider, that through the teachers, and without any further toil, you are communicating religious knowledge to all the children of your congregation!

Let me advise you, moreover, to keep your eye, as it were, always upon the school, though you should rarely be present through the exercises. It will task your strength but a little, when you come down from the pulpit to say a few words to the children, and open with a short prayer. You can also frequently step in a few moments before the public service begins, and when you have help, you can spend more time, going round from pew to pew, listening to some of the recitations, and dropping a word here and there, for the encouragement both of teachers and pupils. They will love to see you.

If there should be any occasion for it, give your advice in regard to the ordinary length of the exercise. When we consider that the teachers and most of the children attend two public services on the same day, there is more danger of making the sabbath school too long than too short. There is danger from too long confinement and too great fatigue. The health, particularly of female teachers, is liable to be impaired by it. Young children cannot sit so long as older persons, and we all know that even adults cannot profit under the best instruction, when the confinement becomes irksome.

A high responsibility will devolve upon you in the choice of text books. There are so many now in use, that it will take up some of your time to examine and compare them, and you are bound, as a faithful pastor, to see to it that nothing is introduced, which militates against the system of divine truth which is taught in your confession of faith, and which is the basis of all your preaching. Wo to the church, where the weekly ministrations of the pastor are counteracted and undermined in the sabbath school. "A house that is divided against itself cannot stand."

One suggestion more, and I will pass on to other topics. It will require a good deal of time and perseverance, to hunt up all the children in the by-ways, that ought to be brought into your sabbath-school, and to induce their parents to send them. Some of this labor will devolve upon you; the teachers cannot do it all; they will want your influence, which when personally exerted, will do more than that of any other man. The poor and the ignorant will have

their difficulties and objections; their children have no decent clothes, they have no books, &c., &c. These difficulties are easily surmounted; they can be clothed, books can be given them, their reluctance can be overcome, and it will depend very much upon your personal agency, how many of them shall be brought into the school, and rescued from the filth, and ignorance, and vice, in which they were perishing. What you cannot do yourself to make them decent and comfortable, you can induce others to do, and thus by the grace of God many of them may be saved.

From the sabbath-school, the way is short and plain to the bible-class. If it is your duty to catechize the children of your congregation, and to see that they are well taught in the sabbath-school room, it is no less so familiarly to instruct the young people in the doctrines and duties of our holy religion in the bible-class. To do justice to this branch of the "Pastoral care" would require a volume, instead of a few hints at the close of a letter. In some of the rural congregations of New England, the greater part of the adults who attend public worship, are in the habit of forming themselves into classes during the intermission, for mutual instruction in the word of God; and it is one of the most delightful spectacles that I ever witnessed. In these classes, those who are the best qualified are expected to take the lead. Perhaps you remember an aged and pious aunt of mine, in the town where our family originated. When she was a "widow" of more than "fourscore years," she might be seen every sabbath at the head of her class, consisting of "mothers in Israel," some of whom were nearly as old as herself! Where this custom prevails, it is not expected that the pastors will regularly teach any of the classes; though it is exceedingly gratifying to see them occasionally moving about from one part of the house to another, and to unite with them as they offer prayer, for the blessing of God upon this method of studying the scriptures.

Such bible-classes as a pastor is expected to organize and instruct, are composed chiefly, if not exclusively, of the young; and in most parts of the land, certainly in our own denomination, the minister would be thought extremely delinquent, who should not have one or more of these classes always under his care. I have no very definite plan to propose for your adoption, either in organizing or teaching such classes. The more common way is, to invite the young people of both sexes to meet their pastor statedly for religious instruction. Another method is, to meet the two sexes separately. I have tried both, and each has its peculiar advantages. I have reason to believe that I never did more good in this department of pastoral labor, than in a class of young ladies at P——, where I passed the most eventful years of my ministry. I cannot say how others may view the subject, but as far as I may be allowed to judge from my own experience, it is better occasionally to change from one form of organization to another, than to adhere exclusively to any. The young are fond of variety, and it is often wise to gratify them.

The same remark holds true, in regard to modes of teaching. Though your object ought always to be the same, viz., the religious instruction, awakening, and conversion of your youthful charge, no exclusive method of bringing the truth to bear upon their minds is prescribed in the scriptures. This year you may take up the shorter, or the larger catechism, giving out one or more questions for each lesson, requiring the class to study the answers thoroughly, and to look out the references. The grand aim of this exercise should be to indoctrinate them—not to dictate what they shall believe—not to intrench in the slightest degree upon the sacred right of private judgment, but to induce them to search the scriptures for themselves, that they may be early "rooted and grounded in the truth." The next year you may, if you think it expedient, vary the exercise a little, by giving out questions, referring to authorities, and appointing a certain number of the class to bring in written dissertations, or leaving it optional with such as may choose to write. I once tried this method for a few months with considerable advantage. It elicits the views of the older and more intelligent members of the class; wakes up a new interest in the minds of all, and affords you an excellent opportunity, in summing up, to enlarge upon the difficult parts of the subject, obviate objections, and settle fundamental principles. Another method is, to take up a gospel or an epistle, give out a chapter or part of a chapter for a lesson, and pursue this course till the book is finished. By preparing yourself for a critical and prac-

ucal exposition of each lesson before it is dismissed, you will secure the double advantage of enriching your own mind with divine knowledge, and imparting it to the juvenile members of your church and congregation. I might easily enlarge on this head, and recommend other methods of imparting Bible instruction to your classes; but your own good judgment, enlightened by experience, will suggest them. There are then, as we have seen, three nurseries of the church,—the family, the sabbath-school, and the bible-class, on which you should keep your eye, and the care of which will either mediately or immediately devolve upon you as the pastor. If you are faithful, and God adds his blessing, though you should not live to gather the full harvest, some other man will no doubt enter into your labors, and reap it after you. that "both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

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